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ON THE OCCASION
OF THE
72ND BIRTHDAY OF SRI AUROBINDO

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APOLOGIA

We regret very much that due to the recent Paper Control Order of the Government of India we had to reduce the size of the Annual to 144 pages. On this account many of the articles which it was our desire to incorporate in this Number, had to be held over for future publication.

It is our hope that our friends and contributors, who assisted us by sending their articles, will appreciate our difficulty and pardon us for not being able to publish their articles in this issue. It is our hope also that the subscribers and readers who were looking forward to papers from many of our well-known contributors, will appreciate our position and excuse us.

PUBLISHERS.

15-8-'44.



Salutation

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!
O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free,
Of India's soul! No soft renown doth crown thy lot,
Nor pelf or careless comfort is for thee; thou'st sought
No petty bounty, petty dole; the beggar's bowl
'Thou ne'er hast held aloft. In watchfulness thy soul
Hast thou e'er held for bondless full perfection's birth
For which, all night and day, the god in man on earth
Doth strive and strain austere; which in solemn voice
The poet sings in thund'rous poems; for which rejoice
Stout hearts to march on perilous paths; before whose flame
Refulgent, ease bows down its head in humbled shame
And death forgetteth fear;—that gift supreme
To thee from Heaven's own hand, that full-orb'd fadeless dream
That's thine, thou'st asked for as thy country's own desire
In quenchless hope, in words with truth's white flame afire,
In infinite faith, hath God in heaven heard at last
This prayer of thine? And so, sounds there, in blast on blast,
His victory-trumpet? And puts he, with love austere,
In thy right hand, today, the fateful lamp and drear
Of sorrow, whose light doth pierce the country's agelong gloom,
And in the infinite skies doth steadfast shine and loom,
As doth the Northern star? O Victory and Hail!
Where is the coward who will shed tears today, or wail
Or quake in fear? And who'll belittle truth to seek
His own small safety? Where's the spineless creature weak
Who will not in thy pain his strength and courage find?
O wipe away those tears, O thou of craven mind!
The fiery messenger that with the lamp of God
Hath come—where is the king who can with chain or rod
Chastise him? Chains that were to bind salute his feet,
And prisons greet him as their guest with welcome sweet,
The pall of gloom that wraps the sun in noontide skies
In dim eclipse, within a moment slips and flies
As doth a shadow. Punishment? It ever falls
On him who is no man, and every day hath feared,
Abashed, to gaze on truth's face with a free man's eye
And call a wrong a wrong; on him who doth deny

His manhood shamelessly before his own compeers,
And e'er disowns his God-given rights, impelled by fears
And greeds; who on his degradation prides himself,
Who traffics in his country's shame; whose bread, whose pelf
Are his own mother's gore; that coward sits and quails
In jail without reprieve, outside all human jails.
When I behold thy face, 'mid bondage, pain and wrong
And black indignities, I hear the soul's great song
Of rapture unconfined, the chant the pilgrim sings
In which exultant hope's immortal splendour rings,
Solemn voice and calm, and heart-consoling, grand
Of imperturbable death, the spirit of Bharat-land,
O poet, hath placed upon thy face her eyes afire
With love, and struck vast chords upon her vibrant lyre,—
Wherein there is no note of sorrow, shame or fear,
Or penury or want. And so today I hear
The ocean's restless roar borne by the stormy wind,
Th' impetuous fountain's dance riotous, swift and blind
Bursting its rocky cage,—the voice of thunder deep
Awakening, like a clarion call, the clouds asleep
Amid this song triumphant, vast, that encircles me,
Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!

And then to Him I bow Who in His sport doth make
New worlds in fiery dissolution's awful wake,
From death awakes new life; in danger's bosom rears
Prosperity; and sends his devotee in tears,
'Mid desolation's thorns, amid his foes to fight
Alone and empty-handed in the gloom of night;
In divers tongues, in divers ages speaketh ever
In every mighty deed, in every great endeavour
And true experience: "Sorrow's naught, howe'er drear,
And pain is naught, and harm is naught, and naught all fear;
The king's a shadow,—punishment is but a breath;
Where is the tyranny of wrong, and where is death?
O fool, O coward, raise thy head that's bowed in fear,
I am, thou art, and everlasting truth is here."

Rabindranath to Sri Aurobindo—

Translated by Kshitish Chandra Sen



Letters of Sri Aurobindo to Disciples*

I

THE YOGA OF TRANSFORMATION

By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature—I do not mean for instance sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's) or a transcendental (chinmaya) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfilment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and Yoga.

Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. Realisation by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness at the top so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or

* These letters were written sometime in the early nineteen thirties in answer to questions from disciples

else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough, it must be the descent of the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or it may be enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, transformation effected by the sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.

I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas—its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. In the earlier stages which is all I deal with in books like the Riddle or the Lights or in the new book to be published¹ there is nothing in it that distinguishes it from the old Yogas except the aim underlying its comprehensiveness, the spirit in its movements and the ultimate significance it keeps before it—also the scheme of its psychology and its working: but as that was not and could not be developed systematically or schematically in these letters, it has not been grasped by those who are not already acquainted with it by mental familiarity or some amount of practice. The detail or method of the later stages of the Yoga which go into little known or untrodden regions, I have not made public and I do not at present intend to do so.

I know very well also that there have been seemingly allied ideals and anticipations—the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantrik sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc., etc. I have alluded to these things myself and have put forth the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining the Divine beyond the world, but also for the very step forward

¹ "The Bases of Yoga"

which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has still to make. I do not therefore care in the least,—even though these ideals were, up to some extent parallel, yet not identical with mine,—whether this Yoga and its aim and method are accepted as new or not; that is in itself a trifling matter. That it should be recognised as true in itself by those who can accept or practise it and should make itself true by achievement is the one thing important; it does not matter if it is called new or a repetition or revival of the old which was forgotten. I laid emphasis on it as new in a letter to certain sadhakas so as to explain to them that a repetition of the aim and idea of the old Yogas was not enough in my eyes, that I was putting forward a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualised, even though it is one natural but still secret outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour.

It is new as compared with the old Yogas:

- (1) Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into Heaven or a Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet it is only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent—the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sadhana. Even the Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the object is the divine fulfilment of life.
- (2) Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of consciousness (the supra-mental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active.
- (3) Because a method has been preconised for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, *viz.*, the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that

are distinctive. I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had I should not have wasted my time in hewing out paths and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.

II

CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness is not, to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative action, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of Yoga, *e.g.*, a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in the being, the Self or Purusha.

Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence. It is there even when it is not active on the surface, but silent and immobile; it is there even when it is invisible on the surface, not reacting on outward things or sensible to them, but withdrawn and either active or inactive within; it is there even when it seems to us to be quite absent and the being to our view unconscious and inanimate.

Consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. It can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; it can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Cit but also Cit Shakti.

Consciousness is usually identified with mind, but mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all the possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all the gradations of colour or human hearing all the gradations of sound—for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range, with which the normal human has no contact and they seem to it unconscious,—supra-mental or overmental and submental ranges.

When Yajnavalkya says there is no consciousness in the Brahman state, he is speaking of consciousness as the human being knows it. The Brahman state is that of a supreme existence supremely aware of itself, *svayamprakāś*,—it is Sachchidananda, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Even if it be spoken of as beyond that, *parātparam*, it does not mean that it is a state of Non-existence or Non-consciousness, but beyond even the highest spiritual substratum (the “foundation above” in the luminous paradox of the Rig Veda) of cosmic existence and consciousness. As it is evident from the description of Chinese Tao and the Buddhist Sunya that that is a Nothingness in which all is, so with the negation of consciousness here. Superconscient and subconscient are only relative terms; as we rise into the superconscient we see that it is a consciousness greater than the highest we yet have and therefore in our normal state inaccessible to us and, if we can go down into the subconscient, we find there a consciousness other than our own at its lowest mental limit and therefore ordinarily inaccessible to us. The Inconscient itself is only an involved state of consciousness which like the Tao or Sunya, though in a different way, contains all things suppressed within it so that under a pressure from above or within all can evolve out of it—“an inert Soul with a somnambulist Force.”

The gradations of consciousness are universal states not dependent on the outlook of the subjective personality; rather the outlook of the subjective personality is determined by the grade of consciousness in which it is organised according to its typical nature or its evolutionary stage.

It will be evident that by consciousness is meant something which is essentially the same throughout but variable in status, condition and operation, in which in some grades or conditions the activities we call consciousness can exist either in a suppressed or an unorganised or a differently organised state; while in other states some other activities may manifest which in us are suppressed, unorganised or latent or else are less perfectly manifested, less intensive, extended and powerful than in those higher grades above our highest mental limit.

III

THE PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Each plane of our being—mental, vital, physical—has its own consciousness, separate though interconnected and interacting; but to our outer mind and sense, in our waking experience, they are all confused together. The body, for instance, has its own consciousness and acts from it, even without any mental will of our own or even against that will, and our surface mind knows very little about this body consciousness, feels it only in an imperfect way, sees only its results and has the greatest difficulty in finding out their causes. It is part of the Yoga to become aware of this separate consciousness of the body, to see and feel its movements and the forces that act upon it from inside or outside and to learn how to control and direct it even in its most hidden and (to us) subconscious processes. But the body-consciousness itself is only part of the individualised physical consciousness in us which we gather and build out of the secretly conscious forces of universal physical Nature.

There is the universal physical consciousness of Nature and there is our own which is a part of it, moved by it, and used by the central being for the support of its expression in the physical world and for a direct dealing with all these external objects and movements and forces. This physical consciousness-plane receives from the other planes their powers and influences and makes formations of them in its own province. Therefore we have a physical mind as well as a vital mind and the mind proper; we have a vital-physical part in us—the nervous being—as well as the vital proper; and both are largely conditioned by the gross material bodily part which is almost entirely subconscious to our experience.

The physical mind is that which is fixed on physical objects and happenings, sees and understands these only, and deals with them according to their own nature, but can with difficulty respond to the higher forces. Left to itself, it is sceptical of the existence of supraphysical things, of which it has no direct experience and to which it can find no clue; even when it has spiritual experiences, it forgets them easily, loses the impression and result and finds it difficult to believe. To enlighten the physical mind by the consciousness of the higher spiritual and

supramental planes is one object of this Yoga, just as to enlighten it by the power of the higher vital and higher mental elements of the being is the greatest part of human self-development, civilisation and culture.

The vital physical, on the other hand, is the vehicle of the nervous responses of our physical nature; it is the field and instrument of the smaller sensations, desires, reactions of all kinds to the impacts of the outer physical and gross material life. This vital physical part (supported by the lowest part of the vital proper) is therefore the agent of most of the lesser movements of our external life, its habitual reactions and obstinate pettinesses are the chief stumbling-block in the way of transformation of the outer consciousness by the Yoga. It is also largely responsible for most of the suffering and disease of mind or body to which the physical being is subject in Nature.

As to the gross material part, it is not necessary to specify its place, for that is obvious; but it must be remembered that this too has a consciousness of its own, the obscure consciousness proper to the limbs, cells, tissues, glands, organs. To make this obscurity luminous and directly instrumental to the higher planes and to the divine movement is what we mean in our Yoga, by making the body conscious,—that is to say, full of a true, awake and responsive awareness instead of its own obscure, limited half-subconscience.

There is an inner as well as an outer consciousness all through our being, upon all its levels. The ordinary man is aware only of his surface self and quite unaware of all that is concealed by the surface. And yet what is on the surface, what we know or think we know of ourselves and even believe that that is all we are, is only a small part of our being and far the larger part of us is below the surface. Or, more accurately, it is behind the frontal consciousness, behind the veil, occult and known only by an occult knowledge. Modern psychology and psychic science have begun to perceive this truth just a little. Materialistic psychology calls this hidden part the Inconscient, although practically admitting that it is far greater, more powerful and profound than the surface conscious self,—very much as the Upanishads called the superconscient in us the Sleep-self, although this Sleep-self is said to be an infinitely greater Intelligence, omniscient, omnipotent, Prajñā, the Ishwara. Psychic science calls this hidden consciousness the subliminal self, and here too it is seen that this subliminal self has more powers, more knowledge, a freer field of movement than the smaller

self that is on the surface. But the truth is that all this that is behind, this sea of which our waking consciousness is only a wave or series of waves, cannot be described by any one term, for it is very complex. Part of it is subconscious, lower than our waking consciousness ; part of it is on a level with it but behind and much larger than it ; part is above and superconscious to us. What we call our mind is only an outer mind, a surface mental action, instrumental for the partial expression of a larger mind behind of which we are not ordinarily aware and can only know by going inside ourselves. So too what we know of the vital in us is only the outer vital, a surface activity partially expressing a larger secret vital which we can only know by going within. Equally, what we call our physical being is only a visible projection of a greater and subtler invisible physical consciousness which is much more complex, much more aware, much wider in its receptiveness, much more open and plastic and free.

If you understand and experience this truth, then only you will be able to realise what is meant by the inner mental, the inner vital, the inner physical consciousness. But it must be noted that this term inner is used in two different senses. Sometimes it denotes the consciousness behind the veil of the outer being, the mental or vital or physical within, which is in direct touch with universal mind, the universal life-forces, the universal physical forces. Sometimes, on the other hand, we mean an inmost mental, vital, physical, more specifically called the true mind, the true vital, the true physical consciousness which is nearer to the soul and can most easily and directly respond to the Divine Light and Power. There is no real Yoga possible, still less any integral Yoga, if we do not go back from the outer self and become aware of all this inner being and inner nature. For then alone can we break the limitations of the ignorant external self which receives consciously only the outer touches and knows things indirectly through the outer mind and senses, and become directly aware of the universal consciousness and the universal forces that play through us and around us. And then only too can we hope to be directly aware of the Divine in us and directly in touch with the Divine Light and the Divine Force. Otherwise we can feel the Divine only through external signs and external results and that is a difficult and uncertain way and very occasional and inconstant, and it leads only to belief and not to knowledge, not to the direct consciousness and awareness of the constant presence.

As for instances of the difference, I may give you two from the opposite poles of experience, one from the most external phenomena showing how the inward opens to the awareness of the universal forces, one of spiritual experience indicating how the inward opens to the Divine. Take illness. If we live only in the outward physical consciousness, we do not usually know that we are going to be ill until the symptoms of the malady declare themselves in the body. But if we develop the inward physical consciousness, we become aware of a subtle environmental physical atmosphere and can feel the forces of illness coming towards us through it, feel them even at a distance and, if we have learnt how to do it, we can stop them by the will or otherwise. We sense too around us a vital physical or nervous envelope which radiates from the body and protects it, and we can feel the adverse forces trying to break through it and can interfere, stop them or reinforce the nervous envelope. Or we can feel the symptoms of illness, fever or cold for instance, in the subtle physical sheath before they are manifest in the gross body and destroy them there, preventing them from manifesting in the body. Take now the call for the Divine Power, Light, Ananda. If we live only in the outward physical consciousness, it may descend and work behind the veil, but we shall feel nothing and only see certain results after a long time. Or at most we feel a certain clarity and peace in the mind, a joy in the vital, a happy state in the physical and infer the touch of the Divine. But if we are awake in the inward physical, we shall feel the light, power or Ananda flowing through the body, the limbs, nerves, blood, breath and, through the subtle body, affecting the most material cells and making them conscious and blissful and we shall sense directly the Divine Power and Presence. These are only two instances out of a thousand that are possible and can be constantly experienced by the sadhaka.

IV

THE PSYCHIC BEING

(1)

The psychic is not, by definition,¹ that part which is in direct touch with the supramental plane,—although, once the connection with the supramental is made, it gives to it the readiest response. The psychic part of us is something that comes direct from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine. In its origin it is the nucleus pregnant with divine possibilities that supports this lower triple manifestation of mind, life and body. There is this divine element in all living beings but it stands hidden behind the ordinary consciousness, is not at first developed and, even when developed, is not always or often in the front; it expresses itself, so far as the imperfection of the instruments allows, by their means and under their limitations. It grows in the consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us, and, finally, by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements, there is developed a psychic individuality,—that which we call usually the psychic being. It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret cause of man's turning to the spiritual life and his greatest help in it. It is therefore that which we have to bring from behind to the front in the Yoga.

The word 'soul', as also the word 'psychic', is used very vaguely and in many different senses in the English language. More often than not in ordinary parlance no clear distinction is made between mind and soul and often there is an even more

¹ Someone had asked what the psychic being was, whether it could be defined as that part of the being which is always in direct touch with the supramental. I reply that it cannot be so defined. For the psychic being in animals or in most human beings is not in direct touch with the supramental—therefore it cannot be so described, by *definition*.

But once the connection between the supramental and the human consciousness is made, it is the psychic being that gives *the readiest response*—more ready than the mind, the vital or the physical. It may be added that it is also a purer response; the mind, vital and physical can allow other things to mix with their reception of the supramental influence and spoil its truth. The psychic is pure in its response and allows no such mixture.

The supramental change can take place only if the psychic is awake and is made the chief support of the descending supramental power.

serious confusion, for the vital being of desire—the false soul or desire-soul—is intended by the words soul and psychic and not the true soul, the psychic being. The psychic being is quite different from the mind or vital; it stands behind them where they meet in the heart. Its central place is there, but behind the heart rather than in the heart; for what men call usually the heart is the seat of emotion, and human emotions are mental-vital impulses, not ordinarily psychic in their nature. This mostly secret power behind, other than the mind and the life-force, is the true soul, the psychic being in us. The power of the psychic, however, can act upon the mind and vital and body, purifying thought and perception and emotion (which then becomes psychic feeling) and sensation and action and everything else in us and preparing them to be divine movements.

The psychic being may be described in Indian language as the Purusha in the heart or the *caitya*² *puruṣa*; but the inner or secret heart must be understood. *hṛdaye guhāyām*, not the outer vital-emotional centre. It is the true psychic entity (distinguished from the vital desire-mind)—the psyche—spoken of in the page of the “Arya” to which you make reference.

(2)

The Jivatma, spark-soul and psychic being are three different forms of the same reality and they must not be mixed up together, as that confuses the clearness of the inner experience.

The Jivatman or spirit, as it is usually called in English, is self-existent above the manifested or instrumental being—it is superior to birth and death, always the same, the Individual Self or Atman. It is the eternal true being of the individual.

The soul is a spark of the Divine which is not seated above the manifested being, but comes down into the manifestation

² The *citta* and the psychic part are not in the least the same. *Citta* is a term in a quite different category in which are co-ordinated and put into their place the main functionings of our external consciousness, and to know it we need not go behind our surface or external nature. Category means here another class of psychological factors, *lātva vibhāga*. The psychic belongs to one class—supermind, mind, life, psychic, physical—and covers both the inner and the outer nature. *Citta* belongs to quite another class or category—*buddhi*, *manas*, *citta*, *prāṇa*, etc.—which is the classification made by ordinary Indian psychology; it covers only the psychology of the external being. In this category it is the main functions of our external consciousness only that are co-ordinated and put in their place by the Indian thinkers; *citta* is one of these main functions of the external consciousness and, therefore, to know it we need not go behind the external nature.

to support its evolution in the material world. It is at first an undifferentiated power of the divine consciousness containing all possibilities which have not yet taken form, but to which it is the function of evolution to give form. This spark is there in all living beings from the lowest to the highest.

The psychic being is formed by the soul in its evolution. It supports the mind, vital, body, grows by their experiences, carries the nature from life to life. It is the psychic or *caitya puruṣa*. At first it is veiled by mind, vital and body, but, as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body; in the ordinary man it depends on them for expression and is not able to take them up and freely use them. The life of the being is animal or human and not divine. When the psychic being can by sadhana become dominant and freely use its instruments, then the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body, not merely their liberation, becomes possible.

The Self or Atman being free and superior to birth and death the experience of the Jivatman and its unity with the supreme or universal Self brings the sense of liberation, it is this which is necessary for the supreme spiritual deliverance: but for the transformation of the life and nature the awakening of the psychic being and its rule over the nature are indispensable.

The psychic being realises its oneness with the true being, the Jivatma, but it does not change into it.

The *bindu* seen above may be a symbolic way of seeing the Jivatman, the portion of the Divine; the aspiration there would naturally be for the opening of the higher consciousness so that the being may dwell there and not in the ignorance. The Jivatman is already one with the Divine in reality, but what is needed is that the rest of the consciousness should realise it.

The aspiration of the psychic being is for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this instrumental being and nature.

Both aspirations are essential and indispensable for the fullness of this Yoga. When the psychic imposes its aspiration on the mind, vital and body, then they too aspire and this is what was felt as the aspiration from the level of the lower being.

The aspiration felt above is that of the Jivatman for the higher consciousness with its realisation of the One to manifest in the being. Therefore both aspirations help each other. The seeking of the lower being is necessarily at first intermittent and oppressed by the ordinary consciousness. It has, by *sadhana*, to become clear, constant, strong and enduring.

The sense of peace, purity and calm is brought about by the union of the lower with the higher consciousness. It is usually either intermittent or else remains in a deeper consciousness, veiled often by the storms and agitations of the surface; it is seldom permanent at first, but it can become permanent by increased frequency and endurance of the calm and peace and finally by the full descent of the eternal peace and calm and silence of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

(3)

A distinction has to be made between the soul in its essence and the psychic being. Behind each and all there is the soul which is the spark of the Divine—none could exist without that. But it is quite possible to have a vital and physical being without a clearly evolved psychic being behind it. Still, one cannot make general statements that no aboriginal has a soul or there is no display of soul anywhere.

The inner being is composed of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical,—but that is not a psychic being. The psychic is the inmost being and quite distinct from these. The word psychic is indeed used in English to indicate anything that is other or deeper than the external mind, life and body, anything occult or supraphysical, but that is a use which brings confusion and error and we entirely discard it when we speak or write about Yoga. In ordinary parlance we may sometimes use the word psychic in the looser popular sense or in poetry, which is not bound to intellectual accuracy, we may speak of the soul sometimes in the ordinary and more external sense or in the sense of the true psyche.

The psychic being is veiled by the surface movements and expresses itself as best it can through these outer instruments which are more governed by the outer forces than by the inner influences of the psychic. But that does not mean that they are entirely isolated from the soul. The soul is in the body in the same way as the mind or vital—but the body it occupies

is not this gross physical frame only, but the subtle body also. When the gross sheath falls away, the vital and mental sheaths of the body still remain as the soul's vehicle till these too dissolve.

The soul of a plant or an animal is not altogether dormant—only its means of expression are less developed than those of a human being. There is much that is psychic in the plant, much that is psychic in the animal. The plant has only the vital-physical evolved in its form, so it cannot express itself—the animal has a vital mind and can, but its consciousness is limited and its experiences are limited, so the psychic essence has a less developed consciousness and experience than is present or at least possible in man. All the same, animals have a soul and can respond very readily to the psychic in man.

The ghost is of course not the soul. It is either the man appearing in his vital body or it is a fragment of his vital that is seized on by some vital force or being. The vital part of us normally exists after the dissolution of the body for some time and passes away into the vital plane where it remains till the vital sheath dissolves. Afterwards it passes, if it is mentally evolved, in the mental sheath to some mental world and finally the psychic leaves its mental sheath also and goes to its place of rest. If the mental is strongly developed, then the mental part of us can remain ; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centred round the true psychic being—for they then share the immortality of the psychic. Otherwise the psychic draws mind and life into itself and enters into an internal quiescence.

Sri Aurobindo

Human Progress

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA.

Creation has evolved. That is to say, there has been a growth and unfoldment and progress. From nebulae to humanity the march cannot but be called an advance, a progress, in more senses than one. But the question is about man. Has man advanced, progressed since his advent upon earth? If so, in what manner, to what extent? Man has been upon earth for the last two million years, they say. From what has happened before him in the course of Nature's evolution, it is legitimate to infer that man too, in his turn, has moved forward in the line towards growth and development. In fact, if we admit that man started life as a savage or jungle-man or ape-man, and look at him as he is today, we have perforce to acknowledge that he has not merely changed but progressed too. The question to be answered is in what sense this progress has been made.

Modern knowledge has taught us that what marks the growth of man is his use of tools. An animal has nothing else than its own limbs as its all-serving tool. Man emerged as man the day he knew how to use tools as an extension of his limbs. And the cycles of human growth have, in consequence, been marked off by the type of tools used. As we all know, anthropologists tell us, there have been four such cycles or ages: (1) the Old Stone Age, (2) the New Stone Age, (3) the Bronze Age and (4) the Iron Age.

In the first age, which is by far the longest period, a period of slow and difficult preparation, man had his first lessons in a conscious and victorious dealing with Nature. The day when he first started chipping a stone was a red-letter day for him; for, by that very gesture he began shredding his purely animal vesture. And when he not only chipped but succeeded in grinding and polishing a piece of stone, he moved up one step further and acquired definitely his humanity. Again, ages afterwards when his hand could wield and manipulate as it liked not only a stone but a metal, his skill and dexterity showed a development unique in its kind, establishing and fixing man's manhood as a new emergent factor. In this phase also there was a first period of training and experiment, the period of craftsmanship in bronze ;

with the age of iron man's arms and fingers attained a special deftness and a conscious control directed from a cranium centre which has become by now a model of rich growth and complex structure and marvellous organisation. The impetus towards more and more efficiency in the making and handling of tools has not ceased: the craftsmanship in iron soon led to the discovery of steel and steel industry. The temper and structure of steel are symbolic and symptomatic of the temper and structure of the brain that commands the weapon—strong, supple, resistant, resilient, capable of fineness and sharpness and trenchancy to an extraordinary degree.

This growing fineness and efficiency of the tool has served naturally to develop and enrich man's external possession and dominion. But this increasing power and dominion over Nature is not the most important consequence involved; it is only indicative of still greater values, something momentous, something subjective pregnant with far-reaching possibilities. For the physical change is nothing compared with the psychological change, the change in the consciousness. In taking up his tool to chip a stone man has started hewing out and moulding entire Nature: he has become endowed with the sense of independence and agency. An animal is a part and parcel of Nature, has no life and movement apart from the life and movement of Nature—even like Wordsworth's child of Nature

*Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones, and trees.*

An animal does not separate itself from Nature, exteriorise it and then seek to fashion it as he wants, try to make it yield things he requires. Man is precisely man because he has just this sense of self and of not-self and his whole life is a conquest of the not-self by the self: this is the whole story of his evolution. In the early stages his sense of agency and self-hood is at its minimum. The rough-hewn flint instruments are symbolic of the first attempts of the brain to set its impress upon crude and brute nature. The history of man's artisanship, which is the history of his civilisation, is also the history of his growing self-consciousness. The consciousness in its attempt to react upon nature separated itself from Nature and, at first stood level against it and then sought to stand over and above it. In this process of extricating itself from the sheath in which it was involved and fused, it came back upon itself, became more and more aware of its freedom and individual identity and agency.

The question is now asked how far this self-consciousness—given to man by his progress from stone to steel—has advanced and what is its future. The crucial problem is whether man has progressed in historical times. Granted that man with an iron tool is a more advanced type of humanity than man with a chipped stone tool, it may still be inquired whether he has made any real advance since the day he learnt to manipulate metal. If by advance or progress we mean efficiency and multiplication of tools, then surely there can be no doubt that Germany of today (perhaps now we have to say Germany of yesterday and America of today) is the most advanced type of humanity—indeed they do make the claim in that country.

So it is argued that man may have built up more and more efficient organisation in his outer life, he may have learnt to wield a greater variety and wealth of tools and instruments in an increasing degree of refinement and power; but this does not mean that his character, his nature or even the broad mould of his intelligence has changed or progressed. The records and remains of Predynastic Egypt or of Proto-Aryan Indus valley go to show that those were creations of civilised men, as civilised as any modern people. The mind that produced the Rig Veda or the Book of the Dead or conceived the first pyramid is, in essential power of intelligence, no whit inferior to any modern scientific brain. Hence a distinction is sometimes made between culture and civilisation; what the moderns have achieved is progress with regard to civilisation, that is to say, the outer paraphernalia; but as regards culture a Plato, a Laotse, a Yajnavalkya are names to which we still bow down.

One can answer, however, that even-if in the last eight or ten thousand years which, they say, is the extent of the present cycle, the civilised or cultural life of humanity has not changed much, this does not mean that it cannot and will not change. The paleolithic age, it appears, covered a period of 30 to 40 thousand years; the neolithic age also must have lasted some fifteen thousand years. The metal age is now not more than ten thousand years. So it does not seem to be too late; perhaps it is just time for another radical and crucial change to come as the chronological scheme would seem to demand.

We propose, however, to reopen the question and inquire if there has not been some kind of radical change or progress in the make-up of human nature and civilisation even within the span of historical times. This reminds us of the remarkable

conclusion or discovery made by the much maligned and much adulated Psycho-analysts.

Jung speaks of two kinds or grades of thinking: (1) the directed thinking and (2) the wishful thinking; one conscious and objective, the other automatic and subjective. The first is the modern or scientific thinking, the second the old-world mythopoeic thinking. These two lines of mental movement mark off two definite stages in the cultural history of man. Down to the Middle Ages man's mental life was moved and coloured by his *libido*—desire-soul; it is with the Renaissance that he began to free his mind from the libido and transfer and transform the libido into non-egoistic and realistic thinking. In simpler psychological terms we can say that man's mentality was coloured and modulated by his biological make-up out of which it had emerged; the age of modernism and scientism began with the development of a rigorous rationalism which means a severance and transcendence of the biological antecedent.

In other words, it can be said that the older humanity was intuitive and instinctive, while modern humanity is rationalistic. Now it has been questioned whether this change or reorientation is a sign of progress, whether it has not been at the most a mixed blessing. Many idealists and reformers frankly view the metamorphosis with anxiety. Gerald Heard vehemently declares that the rationalism of modern age is a narrowing down of the consciousness to a superficial movement, a fore-shortening, a top-heavy specialisation which means stagnation, decay and death. He would rather release the tension in the strangulation of consciousness, even if it means a slight coming down to the anterior level of instinct and intuition, which is more plastic, because less specialised: it is, he says, only in conditions of suppleness and variability of life, organised yet sufficiently free, that the forces of evolution can act fruitfully. It has also been pointed out that *homo sapiens* is not a direct descendant of *homo neanderthalis* who was already a far too specialised being, but of a stock anterior to it which was still uncertain, wavering, groping towards a definite emergence.

Now, these two positions—of Jung and of Heard—offer us a good basis upon which we can try to estimate the nature of man's progress in historical times. Both refer to a crucial change in human consciousness, a far-reaching change having no parallel since it invented the metal tool. The change means the appearance of pure intelligence in man, a change, as we may say in modern terms, in the system of reference, from biological

co-ordinates to those of pure reason. Only, Jung thinks that the reorganisation of the human consciousness is to happen precisely round the focus of pure reason, while Gerald Heard is doubtful about the efficacy of this faculty—of “directive thinking”, as Jung puts it—if it is to lead to overspecialisation, which means the swelling of one member and atrophy of the rest; a greater and supreme direction he seeks elsewhere in a transcendence of intelligence and reason, which, besides, is bound to happen in the course of evolution.

We characterise the change as a special degree or order of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, we have seen, is the *sine qua non* of humanity. It is the faculty or power by and with which man appears on earth and maintains himself as such, as a distinct species. Thanks to this faculty, man has become the tool-making animal, the artisan—*homo faber*. But on emerging from the original mythopoeic to the scientific status man has become doubly self-conscious. Self-consciousness means to be aware of oneself as standing separate from and against the environment and the world and acting upon it as a free agent, exercising one's deliberate will. Now the first degree of self-consciousness displayed itself in a creative activity by which consciousness remained no longer a suffering organon, but became a growing and directing, a reacting and new-creating agent. Man gained the power to shape the order of Nature according to the order of his inner will and consciousness. This creative activity, the activity of the artisan, developed along two lines: first, artisanship with regard to one's own self, one's inner nature and character, and secondly, with regard to the external nature, the not-self. The former gave rise to mysticism and Yoga and was especially cultivated in India, while the second has led to Science, man's physical mastery, which is the especial field of European culture.

Now the second degree of self-consciousness to which we referred is the scientific consciousness *par excellence*. It can be described also as the spirit and power of experimentation, or more precisely, of scientific experimentation: it involves generically the process with which we are familiar in the domain of industry and is termed “synthetic”, that is to say, it means the skill and capacity to create the conditions under which a given phenomenon can be repeated at will. Hence it means a perfect knowledge of the process of things—which again is a dual knowledge: (1) the knowledge of the steps gradually leading to the result and (2) the knowledge that has the power to resolve

the result into its antecedent conditions. Thus the knowledge of the *mechanism*, the detailed working of things is scientific knowledge, and therefore scientific knowledge can be truly said to be mechanistic knowledge, in the best sense of the term. Now the knowledge of the ends and the knowledge of the means (to use a phrase of Aldous Huxley) and the conscious control over either have given humanity a new degree of self-consciousness.

It can be mentioned here that there can be a knowledge of ends without a corresponding knowledge of means, even there can be a control over ends without a preliminary control over means—perhaps not to perfection, but to a sufficient degree of practical utility. Much of the knowledge—especially secular and scientific in ancient times was of this order, what is meant by saying that the knowledge was more instinctive or intuitive than rational or intellectual. In that knowledge the result only, the end, that is to say, was the chief aim and concern, the means for attaining the end was, one cannot perhaps say ignored, but slurred or slipped over, as it were: the process was thus involved or understood, not expressed or detailed out. Thus we know of some mathematical problems to which correct solutions were given of which the process is not extant or is lost as some say. Our suggestion is that there was in fact very little of the process as we know it now—the solution was reached *per saltum*, that is to say, somehow, in the same manner as we find happening in prodigies.

One can point out however that even before the modern scientific age there was an epoch of pure intellectual activity, as represented, for example, by scholasticism. The formal intellectualism, which was the gift of the Greek Sophists or the Mimāṃsakas and grammarians in ancient India, has to be recognised as a pure mental movement, freed from all life value or biological bias. What then is the difference? What is the new characteristic element brought in by the modern scientific intellectualism?

The old intellectualism, generally and on the whole, was truly formal and even to a great extent verbal. In other words, it sought to find norms and categories in the mind itself and impose them upon objects, objects of experience, external or internal. The first discovery of the pure mind, the joy of indulging in its own free formations led to an abstraction that brought about a cleavage between mind and nature, and when a harmony was again attempted between the two, it meant an

imposition of one (Mind) upon another (Matter), a subsumption of the latter under the former. Such scholastic formalism, although it has the appearance of a movement of pure intellect, free from the influence of instinctive or emotive reactions, cannot but be, at bottom, a mythopoeic operation, in the Jungian phraseology; it is not truly objective in the scientific sense. The scientific procedure is to find Nature's own categories—the constants, as they are called—and link up mind and intellect with that reality. This is the Copernican revolution that Science brought about in the modern outlook. Philosophers like Kant or Berkeley may say another thing and even science itself just nowadays may appear hesitant in its bearings. But that is another story which it is not our purpose to consider here and which does not change the fundamental position. We say then that the objectivity of the Scientific outlook, as distinguished from the abstract formalism of old world intellectualism, has given a new degree of mental growth and is the basis of the "mechanistic" methodology of which we have been speaking.

Indeed what we were laying stress upon is the methodology of modern scientific knowledge—the apparatus of criticism and experimentation. We have said that this "methodologism"—the knowledge of means and the consequent control over means—the hall-mark of modern scientific knowledge—is a new degree of the self-consciousness which is the special characteristic of human consciousness. Put philosophically, we can say that the discovery of the *subject* and its growing affirmation as an independent factor in a subject-object relation marks the evolutionary course of the human consciousness.

A still further unveiling seems to be in progress now. The subject has discovered itself as separate from the observed object and still embracing it: but a given subject-object relationship in its turn again is being viewed as itself an object to another subject consciousness, a super-subject. That way lie the ever widening horizons of consciousness opened up by Yoga and spiritual discipline.

In other words, the self-consciousness which marks off man as the highest of living beings as yet evolved by Nature is still not her highest possible instrumentation. As has been experienced and foreseen by Yogins in all ages and climes and as it is being borne in upon the modern mind more and more imperatively, this self-consciousness has to be consciously transcended, lifted and transmuted—worked out into the super-consciousness. Such is Nature's evolutionary *nisus* and such is

the truth and fact man is being driven to face in his inner individual consciousness as well as outer collective life.

We can thus note, broadly speaking, three stages in the human cycle of Nature's evolution. The first was the period of emergence of self-consciousness and the trials and experiments it went through to establish and confirm itself. The ancient civilisations represented this character of the human spirit. The subject freeing itself more and more from its environmental tegument, still living and moving within it and dynamically reacting upon it—this was the character we speak of. Next came the period when the free and dynamic subject feeling itself no more tied down to its natural objective sphere sought lines of development and adventure on its own account. This was the age of speculation and scholasticism in philosophy and intellectual enquiry and of alchemy in natural science—a period roughly equated with the Middle Age. The Scientific Age coming last seeks to re-establish a junction and co-ordination between the free and dynamic self-consciousness and the mode and pattern of its objective field, involving a greater enrichment on one side—the subjective consciousness—and on the other,—the objective environment,—a corresponding change and effective reorganisation.

The present age which ushers a fourth stage—significantly called *turiya* or the transcendent, in Indian terminology—is pregnant with a fateful crisis. The stage of self-consciousness to which scientific development has arrived seems to land in a *cul de sac*, a blind alley: Science also is faced, almost helplessly, with the antinomies of reason that Kant discovered long ago in the domain of speculative philosophy. The way out, for a further growth and development and evolution, lies in a supercession of the self-consciousness, an elevation into a super-consciousness—as already envisaged by Yogis and Mystics everywhere—which will give a new potential and harmony to the human consciousness.

This superconsciousness is based upon a double movement of sublimation and integration which are precisely the two things basically aimed at by present day psychology to meet the demands of new facts of consciousness. The rationalisation, specialisation or fore-shortening of consciousness, mentioned above, is really an attempt at sublimation of the consciousness, its purification and ascension from baser—animal and vegetal—confines: only ascension does not mean alienation, it must mean a gathering up of the lower elements also into their higher

modes. Integration thus involves a descent, but, it has to be pointed out, not merely or exclusively that, as Jung and his school seem to say. Certainly, one has to see and recognise the aboriginal, the infra-rational elements embedded in our nature and consciousness, the roots and foundations that lie buried under the super-structure that Evolution has erected. But that recognition must be accompanied by an upward look and sense: indeed it is healthy and fruitful only on condition that it occurs in a consciousness open to an infiltration of light coming from summits not only of the mind but above the mind. If we go back, it must be with a light that is ahead of us: that is the sense of evolution.

Questions & Answers

BY A. B. PURANI

- Q. The question of Modernist art which began in Europe and is now almost all over the world has been a great puzzle to me. So many claims have been advanced about its achievements in the superlative degree that at times I wonder if my æsthetic faculty is really at fault, because I cannot bring myself round to appreciate it.
- A. You can include in the field all arts—fine as well as plastic, for, behind all Modernist art is working an identical impulse and motive and the same creative force.
- Q. But can you tell me the nature of that art-impulse? I have seen so many modernist works and have been completely mystified. I will also confide to you that I was very much surprised the other day to find Tagore's crude paintings being hailed as great masterpieces by really great artists and art-critics. Do you think there ever can be some standard of art-values or will it always remain a field of mere personal likes and dislikes?
- A. In spite of the earnest desire and efforts of some leaders there have been unfortunately, up to now, no universal art-values.
- Tagore's art should not be taken apart from the general modernist movement. In order to evaluate this art you have to follow its evolution in Europe,—especially in France,—during the last century. Appearances are deceptive, and behind these seemingly crude works there may be genuine seeking for new ways in art-expression.
- Q. Art is eminently a field of forms and if you do not take count of the form you might as well drop art altogether. I am interested in the evolution of modernist art if that can make me understand and appreciate it. With their machine-like designs, patterns and schemes, their two-headed men and human faces with three eyes in two dimensions I am quite unable to find my bearings!
- A. Modernist art began with an effort to break with the

tradition of art in Europe, firstly because the old ideals and methods had probably exhausted all their possibilities and also because personality of the artist began to claim the right of an individual expression. Besides, such problems of technique presented themselves to the artist as had not attracted the attention of old artists.

Q. You do not mean to say that all tradition in art is useless? Tradition at least supplies a wide, impersonal basis of technique based on past experience to the budding artist. It sets a high standard before him.

A. It is also valuable as a discipline and can, if rightly used, become a source of strength. Tradition is like a road that should lead the artist beyond itself, to new discoveries,—but it should not become a bar or a boundary.

Q. What are the aims of the Modernist movement in plastic arts?

A. Its aims are:

(i) Simplicity or rather simplification of the forms of nature.

(ii) Reduction of details of forms, therefore, to a secondary place.

(iii) To set up special value for colour by trying to arrive at a new plane—a plane of colour of each object.

Q. Who set about achieving these aims? Was it Courbet or Monet?

A. Courbet was a half naturalist, but he gave up the idea of imitation of Nature as the sole aim of art. Monet who followed him stood for Nature, not as she is in studio, but as she is in the open. He introduced the new way of treating light—the strong contrasts of tones and colours. Both of them may be said to have begun the departure. But it was the genius of Cézanne, the great pioneer that ushered in the new era. He effected a complete break with the art tradition of his times. In fact the need for a new departure in plastic arts was being felt since the end of the 18th century. For instance, nobody before these artists would think of painting the “peasants” because the popular idea was that they are “ugly”! These artists showed that nothing is ugly in itself. Art before Cézanne was considered an adornment of civilised life, at best it was

a means of evoking purely emotional reaction. Naturalism and a kind of Realism were both tried and their possibilities seem to have been exhausted. Romanticism of De la Croix brought in only a temporary relief.

- Q. But now in place of ordinary emotions they have brought in what is called "æsthetic emotion" as a necessary reaction to a work of art. It is said that art is essentially made up only of formal elements and that the subject-matter has nothing to do with art. The alphabets of beauty are the point, line, angle, cone, square, curve, mass, volume, position, magnitudes, dimensions, perspective.
- A. Do you mean to say æsthetic emotion is something that exists apart from the whole of life—for itself and by itself? Although I grant that form has a great place in art I can't admit form has nothing to do with the content and that from the artistic point of view the greatest masterpiece is equal to any well-executed, cleverly painted landscape.
- Q. That is to say one must not try to see anything beyond mass, volume, position, colour, arrangements; "sense of composition is the soul of geometry of beauty". It is said that structure and design are essential to art. These elements are analysable, there is nothing mystical about them. For instance, take the "Tranfiguration" by Raphael. A great critic says that the religious background of this painting is not its essential part, it is an overtone, it has nothing to do with the pure "æsthetic emotion". It is the disposition of masses, the composition of the picture, the design and the colour-scheme that give rise to pure æsthetic emotion.
- A. Do you mean to say that Raphael while painting the picture kept the masses and colour-scheme before his vision? If art is a means of expressing the vision of the artist, then the content of art has a definite relation to form as well as art. Besides, how are you going to isolate the æsthetic emotion from the rest of life? Æsthetics have something to do with beauty, and beauty (as I said in "Question and Answer" III) is not merely formal. If you maintain that the onlooker is not concerned with the vision of the artist but merely with the æsthetic reactions in his own consciousness to a work of art, you entirely miss the purpose of art which is to convey to the onlooker without

alteration,—or with as little alteration as possible,—the experience of the artist. Sri Aurobindo rightly says: “All art starts from the sensuous and sensible or takes it as a continual point of reference or at the lowest uses it as a symbol and a fount of images, even when it soars. But equally all art worth the name must go beyond the visible, must reveal, must show something that is hidden and in its total effect not reproduce but create.” Formal elements have a place—and an important place in art,—but there are other things also. The effort of the modernists to reduce creative art to a manipulation of technique completely ignores the true origin and function of art and is therefore bound to fail.

Q. I was surprised to find that these Modernist European artists who excelled in representing Nature produced such unnatural ugliness.

A. The reason, as I told you, is that naturalism had come to a halt. People began to find that the highest aim of art is neither representation nor successful imitation of Nature, because such art can carry man only where he already is (*i.e.*, on the ordinary physical plane); true art must be revelation of undiscovered harmony and unity. Cézanne, refused to copy nature. He was not satisfied even with Impressionism.

Q. What is Impressionism?

A. The whole outlook of European mind in those days—as even now—was strongly influenced by scientific ideas. The stress was on finding out of objective truth of the world—to banish as completely as possible the subjective element from all branches of human culture. Naturalism and Realism were already there, but failed to do the job. The stress in arts was to select from Nature and record. The Impressionist wants to transfer to the canvas the image received by the retina. He wants neither to make any comments, nor draw any conclusions. He thinks that is foreign to the purpose of art. He does not care about composition nor about decoration.

Q. It is rather difficult, I should think.

A. It is very unnatural and most uncommon because man cannot completely neutralise the working of his memory

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

and his intellect. The result of this attitude was that they began to see and study the superficial view of objects more accurately than people in the past had done and the result was a tendency to simplification of forms. They sacrifice line to gain unity of visual impression. There is no precise shape or relationship of parts and the whole. Their main purpose is to create a general impression. For example, they want to represent the entire field of grass,—not the outline or detail of each blade of grass; they would rather paint the crowd and ignore the individual; they would want to convey the atmosphere of winter without its details. Instead of a tree they would like to give the essence of forest-life, instead of man,—masculine strength, and so on. The Impressionist wants to reproduce the impression of the object or its atmosphere—not the object itself. Some critics find that Impressionism lacks structure—their complaint may be said to be that it produces only an atmosphere—no substance.

Q. Did Cézanne have any theory of art?

A. He had problems to solve but no theories. Even if genius accepts theories it is not limited by them. Great artists follow their own genius and vision. They hardly go to absurdities which inevitably follow the logical application of theories. You will be surprised to know that this greatest pioneer among modern artists not only had no theory of his own but was slow and had a very laborious method of work. And still more surprising is the fact that he did not know drawing and was not able to draw the human form. An example of his perseverance, patience and at the same time slowness is afforded by the fact that he took one hundred and fifteen sittings of a friend of his for making his portrait and at last gave it up in despair only remarking that he was "dissatisfied with the shirt-collars"!

Q. Strange! Isn't it? And yet how did he manage to do his work?

A. All masters work with inspired unconsciousness. Cézanne's mind was seized by the problem of how to render solid volume and materiality of objects and forms. Impressionism did not offer him any solution of this problem and so it could not satisfy him though he accepted their perception of colour-values and of surface under light. He believed

that mass, volume and density were not to be ignored in painting. Working at his problem Cézanne found simple geometrical forms in all Nature. "All forms in Nature" he said "can be reduced to the sphere, the cone and the cylinder". He, thereafter, arranged his landscapes in harmony with his sensibility to form and colour. There is strength, simplicity and rhythm of lines and spaces in his work. He attempted to render form by colour—(almost entirely)—ignoring the line. He was keen on conveying the illusive sensation of an object, such as the warmth of colour of a fruit.

Q. If he was so slow, how could he make his living from art?

A. Fortunately he had not to depend upon his art for his maintenance; otherwise he would have starved. It was his passion. He did not care even to keep his painting carefully. At times he left them in the fields where he worked at his problems especially if he found that the painting showed no solution of the problems.

Q. Was he able to solve his problems?

A. He was able to indicate the solutions. But this work might have remained incomplete but for two great geniuses who followed in his wake and were able to show the possibilities of Cézanne's new approach to art. They were: Van Gogh and Gauguin.

Q. What is their contribution to modern art?

A. I would like to tell you at length the tragic life-story of Van Gogh, but it would be too long. Like Cézanne he took to art without any training. He was very impulsive and of an intensely religious temperament. He found that his religious service—as a priest—did not hinder but helped his art pursuit. He brought in novelty of subject-matter, for he saw heroism in labouring man and woman and wanted to paint "the epic of humble life". He tried to train himself but he could not follow the conventional method which he found "lifeless and top-heavy". He believed that volume was more important than outline. In his paintings he worked with short deliberate strokes of colour—grey, brown, black,—he did not care for light and shade. His life was cut short at 37 by suicide.

Q. What about Gauguin?

A. He was a banker by profession but the pursuit of life's mystery fascinated him. That pursuit led him to Tahiti in Polynesia among the aborigines. He was interested in dark, primitive instincts and vibrations which he thought were at the root of life's mystery. His colour studies are marvellous. You should see his "Three Tahitians".

Q. Did Gauguin have a theory of his own?

A. Not exactly a theory but he had unconventional and new ideas on art. For instance, he believed that "Nature may be violated and brought by a sublime deformation to a permanent beauty".

Q. Does it not look like justification of multi-limbs and other symbolism of Indian art wherein universal powers are embodied in artistic forms in which nature seems successfully violated and brought to sublime beauty?

A. A modernist artist tries to go beyond nature in his colours, forms etc. because he wants to represent beauty—in strong colours and shapes—which is in his mind,—beauty which abstract formations, lines and colours evoke in his own mind. "It is true that an artist may express what he has to say in what is called 'significant form'—not the natural one—but then it must be a truth he has seen which may be the truth of heaven or truth of hell or an immediate truth behind things terrestrial or any other, but is never an external truth of the earth." (*Sri Aurobindo*.)

The artist in ancient India was directed to look within himself to arrive at his form. The modernist in rendering the beauty of forms depends more often on analytic methods—observation of nature—which has certainly contributed to a great advance in technique, whereas the ancients depended upon tradition and synthetic vision of the artist.

Gauguin also held that "in the creation of a picture the eye is not to play a more important part than feeling or reason".

Q. How did cubism come?

A. You know that Cézanne wanted to convey solidity of objects in painting and that he found simple geometrical forms everywhere in nature. Cube was one of them. Other artists seized this form and thought that they had in the cube the

primary expressive element which they had been looking for and they tried to work out its relation to colour, light and shade. By reducing reality to this simple basic form they believed that they got essentials of structure instead of accidents of appearance. To some painters cubism supplied the element of solidity and of design in nature. First they imitated the cubic surface and analysed natural objects into a number of cubes well-arranged. Thus, they thought one could construct the picture independently of the distracting variety of nature. An artist can work with these materials like a master builder.

Q. But far from objectivism, it looks a very subjective process. It is by the mind that one projects these cubes in natural forms, is it not?

A. Certainly. And the result is a highly intellectual art which is based on analysis of objects into certain conceptual forms. For instance, conceptual cubism tended to create what is now called "Abstract Art". Imitative cubism gave rise to a certain decorative movement in modernist art.

Q. Are there other schools of Modernist art that claim to derive from Cézanne?

A. Numerous; and to some of them even Cézanne is quite old-fashioned! There is Pointillism, Post-impressionism, Fauvism, Surrealism, etc., to name only a few.

Q. What is Pointillism?

A. It is a name for a movement of art which adopted a special method of painting. It consisted in portraying forms by an infinite number of small juxtaposed points of different colours which blend into harmony because the eye recomposes them according to the laws of light. These forms preserve their clarity of outline. Seurat was the founder of this school and one of the most successful painters.

Q. And Fauvism? and Post-impressionism?

A. Those artists who stood for a return to pure instincts alone in art took upon themselves the name of "Fauves" meaning "wild beasts". They exploited the colour-value of Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin and tried to render form by aggressive colour only and gave organised deformations. This art degenerated into plebian art.

After the Impressionists there came those artists who wanted to paint not the changing appearance of a place, a street or a landscape but its permanent character. Even in portrait-painting they tried to carry out the same idea—i.e., draw not the outward features or changing mood but the character of the person as seen by the artist.

Q. Cézanne and the triumph of technique which followed immediately after him seem to be quite different from the chaotic modernism of our times.

A. Quite so. But it is the natural result I believe of advance along a line of technical perfection in rendering form from the outside. To the modernist nature in herself is not important or interesting. She is like a grand repertoire of infinite forms, designs and colours. The artist may keep what he likes or requires from them and reject or omit what he does not require. He may, like the Surrealists in literature, try to penetrate the inmost reality of man by plunging into the sub-conscious giving forms to his primitive instincts, dream-worlds and disconnected impulses from the realm of the abnormal.

Q. And yet it is clear that the modernists are in dead earnest about their mission. I wonder why they don't score a great success in their endeavour.

A. We can give them unstinted praise for their sincerity and faith in their mission. Modernist art has got two valuable qualities from them: Broadness and freedom. And whether we like or understand their art or not they are men who are prepared to sacrifice and suffer for their ideal and are entitled to our praise on that account at least.

But if the modernist is searching for the Truth of life, the Reality behind all life, and if he wishes to express it in his art-creation then the path he is pursuing seems bound to lead him to failure.

Q. Why do you think so?

A. Because modernist art is too intellectual and analytical—each school is more or less directly under a dogmatic theory of art. It, therefore, often lacks the truth of life and is often devoid of vision. Analysis is not the final secret of art. Sometimes it is said in justification of this art that it represents life. Perhaps yes, but what kind of life?—Life

of dark primitive instincts, half-articulate impulses, nervous excitements and sensations. Man thus seen is very near the animal.

The ancients also represented life and the modernists try to dismiss their work as unreal simply because the life represented by them is not familiar to them. If the ancients expressed in their art an inner experience about an aspect of the cosmic Reality the moderners think it unreal—at any rate, less real than representation of physical nature or an action in life, or of nature remoulded according to the idea of the artist.

- Q. It may be said in their defence that they try to paint what they actually see.
- A. Yes, but the point is whether they see anything except what the retina shows. Do we expect an artist to paint the world merely as he sees it with his retina—perhaps with a more vigilant power of careful observation—which means as you and I also see it or as he sees it with some other power of a transforming vision?
- Q. You can't say that the modernist has not been trying to give us the art according to *his* transforming vision! Only you and I do not and cannot understand him.
- A. As an eminent art-critic says of the modernist, "Each seeks to invent an artistic *esparanto* unmistakably his and his alone" (*A. K. Coomarswamy*).

The result is artistic bareness. Each is trying to work out an intellectual theory or follow some mental idea not expressing his vision or inspiration. If it was that our inmost soul would respond to it with a spontaneous understanding and sympathy. An Egyptian Statute, or a winged Assyrian Bull may strike your outer sense as unusual and even queer, but it does not shock you as a line drawing of a man with three eyes set in two different planes does in a work of Picasso; and remember Picasso is a very great artist!

- Q. But you can't say that he is not sincerely trying to get at the Reality?
- A. The impulse behind these erring efforts of the modernists has been very well described in a letter by Sri Aurobindo. He says with his usual profundity, "The idea (of the

modernist) is to get rid of all over-expression, of language for the sake of language, of form for the sake of form because all that veils the thing in itself, dresses it up, prevents it from coming out in the seizing nudity of its truth, the power of its intrinsic appeal. There is a sort of mysticism here that wants to express the inexpressible, the concealed, the invisible; reduce expression to its barest bareness and you get nearer the inexpressible. It is the same impulse that pervades the recent endeavour of art. Form hides, not expresses the reality; let us suppress the concealing form and express the reality by its appropriate geometrical figures and you have cubism, or, since that is too much, suppress exactitude of form and replace it by more significant forms that indicate rather than conceal the truth—so you get “abstract” painting or, what is within reveals itself in dreams, not in waking phenomena, let us have in poetry or painting the figures, visions, sequences, design of dream and you have Surrealist art and poetry”.

Q. So, there is justification for the modernist art!

A. Not exactly justification but an explanation. Do not think that the modernist succeeds in unravelling the mystery or in arriving at the Reality.

As all art reflects the spirit of the times, the modernist too reflects the modernist spirit in his work.

Q. What is that modernist spirit as reflected in the actual works of art?

A. I admit they are sincere in their search for the world of beauty and harmony, but in their groping efforts they seem to stumble upon the underworld of vital beings, or even upon some lower—*paishāchic*—world—very rarely upon the heavenly garden of Indra where one meets the Gods in their glorious forms and splendour and where *even* the trees and flowers breathe a beauty all their own.

To be frank, I am afraid there may intervene an all-round decadence, unless this period turns out to be an interval before the new art-world is found. As it is, it seems to be a period of decadence trying hard to become interesting. Or, to put it differently, the mind of the modernist artist seems to be trying to become original by extravagance.

After the first world-war the modern mind has become very restless, hysterical, interested in the abnormal and it is this condition which we see reflected in the modernist art. It is broken into various theories, and into ideological groups. It is so very far from the ancient Greek or Indian art which seem to have a wide background of peace and harmony and a spontaneous delight of creation. What I mean is that the modernist art is not calm and self-contained in its perception or sure of its grasp or attainment of the reality. They, therefore, try analysis of form, light, colour, volume etc. in order to arrive at the Reality. But the process is foredoomed to failure. All modernist triumphs in art are mainly triumphs of technique which at best are of secondary importance. They seem to confine Nature to external nature only, and man's inner nature to primitiveness. They get such an obsession of certain primitive impulses like the sex!—in representing which they often become vulgar.

- Q. But you do not mean to say that the ancients were puritans or that sex was taboo in their arts?
- A. Far from it. They had a more balanced view about the sex and about its place in life. They expressed their perception of the truth behind the crude sex-impulse, sometimes in the form of satyrs. But they did not believe that the most primitive form of erotic impulse was the most fundamental Reality of Life or was its most beautiful aspect. Some of the ancients expressed their perception in the artistic form of Shiva and Shakti depicting deep and abiding soul-relationship,—not the commonplace of husband and wife, or lover and beloved with their attractions, kisses and embraces. That perception culminated in the form of *Ardhanariswar*—the masculine and feminine—the two together making up the One Reality.
- Q. Do you not hope or wish that some day art should become a great uniting force, some thing like a universal language?
- A. Much as I would wish it, I am afraid the modernist art is far too self-conscious and limited by its theories to be able to give us a universal art-language. Also when it would come, I think, it would not be an easy language. Most people when they speak of a universal language imply that it would be understood correctly by everybody. I am not so optimistic. For I believe that one who would understand such

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universal language of arts must outgrow the limitations of race, time and country and must have a consciousness capable of unity with humanity in all its stages of development. It would require a large and generous heart, catholic tastes and freedom from all preference and prejudice and universal impartiality in the mind.

Q. But don't you think that the times might bring about a development in that direction?

A. It is quite possible,—especially because the rapid transport is now removing the many old physical barriers and increasing the possibilities of contacts between man and man to such an extent that it would not be surprising if cultural isolation and natural prejudices would give way before long and the conscience of the intelligentsia—the leaders of every nation—would beat in unison with the whole humanity. The car, the aeroplane, the steamer and factories are—apart from commercialising him—tending to unite man physically. On whether man will use these opportunities for increasing human unity or disrupting nations will depend the future of mankind.

Q. These are all instruments that may be used either for good or for evil—I do not see how they—

A. I don't say they are being used for the good of mankind. But I maintain that the awakened conscience of humanity—even if active in its leaders—can use these as unifying forces.

Q. Will then art become uniform—everywhere the same?

A. Not at all. It would be very dull to have no variety in art-expression. I should think rather that art would vary according to the nature of materials available, local conditions, cultural and artistic environment. As one critic asks pertinently "Can we imagine Srirangapattam on the bank of Seine?" Even when the subject is the same the variation in art-expression is bound to be there, e.g. the expression of Nirvana of Buddha in Indian and Chinese arts.

Q. Many art critics and artists to-day believe and work with the idea that popular art—art that appeals to the average man—is the only true art.

A. Tolstoi started that idea branding other arts as artificial and parasitical. There is no objection to some art being for all

but to limit all art or the highest art to popular art, or to say that what is not appreciated by the crowd, the average man, is not art, is to misunderstand the highest function of art (which is spiritual). Besides this modernist tendencies of erotic folly and subconscious impulses together with the craze for making art popular tend to its vulgarisation and decadence. For, you will also admit that the artist's purpose is not merely to convey or awaken emotion or imitate or represent nature or reduplication of the actual, but to reveal to us in stone or colour "what nature is, what man is, what God is"—*Sri Aurobindo*.

- Q. I can understand an artist trying to paint landscape, flowers, still-life, mountains, rivers, seas, lakes, women, birds, beasts and all the play of life and relation and action and reaction of heart. But how is he going to tell us what nature is or what God is?
- A. Let the true artist come and he will find a way to tell you these things. Look at Italian artistic efflorescence—the world of Architecture, Sculpture and painting it has given, or at another world of Ajanta and Ellora. What a vision, what power and what work! Consider any Natarāja and you will have an idea of the artist's revelation.
- Q. But is not all that something merely imaginary and unreal?
- A. You again forget the true function of art: it is search and finding of a perfect or an ideal rhythm. Life actual at its best is a broken rhythm. To show the perfect rhythm and to indicate how the imperfect rhythm of actual life is related to the perfect rhythm of ideal life, "to be able to suggest the unconquerable Divine force, in men and in the world; to show the Divine nature in its calm, wideness, greatness, attractiveness, to breathe it into man's soul and mould man into an image of the Infinite"—*Sri Aurobindo*. That is also a high purpose and spiritual utility of art.
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Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy—A Cure For Marxist Fallacies

BY VASANTA K. DONDE

If spiritual leaders have influenced human thought for ages, intellectual thinkers have at least in many cases dominated in some centuries. Of course such thinkers are always few but their existence and the influence they wield cannot be denied. In the West which has been for centuries under the influence of Intellect we come more across intellectual giants like Marx than saints or sages of Eastern type. Especially in the case of Marx his doctrines held a sway to an extent that his contemporaries could never have anticipated. Few prophets of the nineteenth century Europe could ever have foreseen that this rebellious student of Hegel would be hailed by posterity as a founder of a new Ideology all over the world in general and in a nation comprising one-sixth of the area of our globe in particular. Fewer still could have thought that the destiny of the whole of this great nation would change because of this ideology and almost none could have dreamt that such a nation would gain strength enough to play an important part in the present day world affairs. Still such has been the intrinsic strength of Marx's ideology! The intensity and rapidity with which Marxism spread in less than a century in Europe, America and Asia speaks for the intelligent and critical brain of its founder.

The success of Marxism throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century and the present one was no doubt due to its stand taken on the basis of Realism; but it was not the type of an extreme conservative Realism. On the contrary, it sought to reconcile the irregularities of its previous varieties. In doing this Marxism boldly rejected Materialism of the mechanistic type where it found that the latter fell short of the actual results and therefore it had to style itself as "dialectic materialism". And though it then stated merely the half-truth, and not the whole or integral truth, the fact remains that it did admit the short-comings of Materialism. It is now left for argument how far the Marxist corrections led to the proper and desired result

or whether they did not on the contrary take the Marxists straight to their opponents' camp; and hence to reject Marxism as an altogether incorrect thought, a fantasy, an imagination, will be the greatest mistake in these days when a greater proof of its partial truth is discernible. The correct attitude will, therefore, be to view it critically and show its limitations, its wrong judgments and see also if it has a good side to its credit. But to ignore Marxism altogether would be tantamount to the denial of one of the many facets of truth.

The feud between Idealism and Materialism is of a very long standing. The nineteenth century materialism succeeding Hegelian Idealism took the view that Thought is conditioned by Being and not Being by Thought. Being with its basis in itself is conditioned by itself. Dialectic Materialism of Marx and others rested upon this foundation laid by Feuerbach. Before declaring his allegiance to Feuerbach, Marx was a follower of Hegel. The influence of Hegel on Marx was so great that according to Plekhanov it is difficult to grasp Marx's philosophy unless one knows something about Hegel's. Marx wrote in one of his letters at the age of twentythree, "You, my fatherly friend, have always been to me a living '*argumentum ad oculos*', that Idealism is not a fancy but a truth." And this metaphysical subconscious feeling in Marx persisted even after his subsequent divorce from Hegel. Probably Max Eastman is right in his accusation that Marx remained a German Metaphysician in spite of his bitter crusade against German "Ideology" or metaphysics. Max Eastman might call this a defect in Marxism—and this is no place for arguing about its correctness—but the fact remains that Marxism maintained that society is moving to a desirable end, that is to say, from a 'lower' to a 'higher' level. It was Engels who said that "all successive historic conditions are only transitory steps in the endless evolution of human society from the lower to the higher and Marx spoke of the 'higher' life-form towards which the existing society tends irresistibly by its own economic development". He further stated that the workers "have no ideal to realize, they have only to release the elements of the new society which the collapsing bourgeois society carries in the womb". In other words, they are merely tools in the hands of the Creator who has planned this great scheme of leading society to higher form; as against this Hegel has maintained already that it is a Divine Mind evolving with logical necessity. In both the logical necessity is kept, also the ascending process of evolution and ultimately the mode of its ascent in

the dialectic manner. The attitude of a thorough-going Realist, for example an American Matter-of-Fact person, is nowhere to be found in both the philosophies which speak of a logical necessity reconciling the opposites in a higher—and a desirable—unity. One may not agree with Max Eastman as regards all his charges against Marxism, but there is no doubt about a greater inner rapport between Hegelianism and Marxism.

And this makes it more important to state that Marxism in spite of its mask of stark realism and hot revolutionism is a sort of idealism that fights shy of the spiritual term. This naturally makes us inquisitive about the essence of Marxism so rich in content but poor in its form. One may ask, what fallacious reasoning in Marxism has brought such contradiction in Marxism itself?

The first thing that strikes one while reading Marxist thought is that it has essentially a philosophical attitude, and this very thing has made Max Eastman refuse to call it a science. He says that Marx was so much soaked in the metaphysics of Hegel that he naturally got the habit of viewing the world as a system instead of a bundle of facts. Max Eastman ridicules the philosophic attitude which, while suggesting a plan for building a dam across a creek, invariably starts with the creation of the world and gets us to agree about the essential nature of Being and the relation between Pure Reason and the categories of the understanding. In short, he abhors the philosophical approach in Marxism which to us is an asset in so far as it has realised the necessity to have an integral knowledge of the whole before making any statement about the parts. For us, who believe in the ultimate realization of the Supramental or the integral knowledge, truths about parts are of little value, being half-truths or partial truths only.

Secondly, Marxism is essentially a philosophy of Becoming without any relation to Being. It asserts continual change in a dialectic manner. The thesis gives birth to anti-thesis and both are dissolved in a synthesis which is always on a higher level. And though it avoids the acceptance of Being, against the background of which the Becoming really plays, it admits the same unconsciously in its doctrine of "from lower to higher levels". Otherwise not only change has no meaning but the expressions "higher" and "lower" are meaningless.

Thirdly, change brings in the notion of a process and the method or the manner in which the process has to work or is actually working. Here also Marx proved to be a faithful

disciple of Hegel in keeping intact the dialectic process in his new philosophy. The Becoming was for Hegel also dialectical in nature. But it was Hegel's shrewdness which further stated that this dialectical form of Becoming owed its existence to the dialectical form of Divine Thought or Idea. The world shows the form of dialectic movement because its primeval cause, the Divine Idea, bore the same in its womb. For Hegel ideas developed dialectically and hence the world behaved according to its divine counterpart. But Marx had burnt all his boats to divinity though he had stuck to the dialectical process; that is why though he stated that nothing exists except the Becoming he had to further state the form in which Becoming assumes or expresses itself and he named that form as Dialectics. In other words, he admitted Being, Stability, as against Becoming. He made his Becoming whirl round the nucleus of Being or made the Being to cast its shadow in the Becoming. Had this not been so he would not have asserted that Reality moved in a dialectical form. Marx always maintained that he turned Hegel upside down by making matter the demiurge of Ideas, but here we find that in explaining the dynamics of matter, the process in the Becoming, he fell a prey to the snares of the statics of Being, the eternal stability holding in its bosom the eternal movement.

Marx's amendments to materialism of his days consisted mainly in this, that he contemplated the mutual relations between object and subject from the side from which the subject is seen to assume an active role as functional and not merely contemplative. In his oft-quoted remark about Feuerbach Marx says, "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the object, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object of contemplation but not as human sensuous activity, praxis, not subjectively. Thus it happened that the active side, in opposition to materialism, was developed by idealism, but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really differentiated from the thought-objects but he does not conceive human activity itself as activity through objects".

This remark of Karl Marx has again differentiated materialism of the 19th century and dialectic materialism of the same epoch. According to Marx we should not deal with the act of sensation as purely a thing presented to the eye from outside but also, and at the same time, from the subjective point of view. It is a "praxis" in opposition to mere abstraction either

on the subjective side carrying us to idealism or on the objective side to materialism. In other words, Marx tried to bring into the sense activity the subject-object factor, and Marx was right, because unless there is a subject present to receive and react to the flood of emanations of matter, there cannot be any sense activity as such and further there can neither be conceptions nor thoughts, nor ideas, there would never be thus any knowledge of the outside world.

What Marx really contributed to the materialist philosophy in particular and philosophy in general was his constructive criticism of Feuerbach's philosophy. We find that his contribution to Feuerbach's materialism was the only differentiating point as far as dialectic and mechanistic materialism were concerned. The difference lay in so far as he had thought of subject as of equal importance with the object in the process of human cognition, Marx being intelligent enough to see through the unreal position taken both by one-sided idealists and materialists could not but stress this element of subject in his otherwise materialist philosophy. But then he kept many questions unsolved. First and foremost, how far this subject, a party to the process of cognition, is free to have it at all? If without the help of the subjective factor cognition is an impossibility, it must be admitted that the freedom possessed by the subject must be given its due; in other words, we have to recognise his freedom not to have any cognition at all. We may ask, is not the subject free to have or not to have any cognition at a particular moment? Probably the Marxists may argue that man's activity in cognition is determined by his existence as a result of his being, that is to say, the human body. The activity of brain-matter is such that he cannot but be an agent in the process of cognition or sense-activity or "praxis". We do not doubt this, but our contention is that if this consciousness is qualitatively not different from the matter (body) which produces it, then there would be no difference between mechanistic and dialectic materialism. But dialectic materialists would not agree to this, they maintain that consciousness is a qualitative change effected in the process of material evolution. It is said to be qualitatively different even though it is born of matter. We may perhaps agree to that; but while agreeing we may contend that this quality is teleological or at least a self-activity. This quality of life is the great differentiating factor in the process of material evolution as claimed by science. What then is the relation of this self-activity to blind

activity of the universe, of freedom to blind necessity, of bliss to helpless suffering etc.?

Thus while crediting Marxism for the task of releasing materialism from its mechanistic attitude, for bringing in the truth that matter evolving blindly (?) from "lower to higher" stages cannot be interpreted by one set of laws but different laws at different stages of evolution, we find that this very divorce from its mother-faith, viz., materialism, has brought it to the very threshold of spiritualism. For we have now arrived at a position where the problem of life is involved; and the laws of life are essentially different. For, matter moves blindly or mechanically, that is, without any purpose. Such is not the case with life which moves teleologically. The Marxists would again curl up and say, "Well, did we not say to you that there are different laws for different qualities, e.g., the law of electricity and mechanics. The mode of movement of matter charged with electricity differs widely from that when it is not so charged. And if life behaves in a certain way (law) that cannot be comprehended by the laws of matter known to mankind so far, we need not jump to the conclusion that this new movement is not, therefore, a quality of matter but of spirit, or that matter has disappeared at that stage disclosing the real and inner core of spirit behind matter". For, they further argue, this new quality or behaviour of matter so far discovered is ultimately the quality of matter, the only difference being that it is qualitatively different. This argument however cuts both ways. If difference in laws does not suggest fundamental difference in substance (material or spiritual), it cannot also be stated that such difference in the behaviour of matter or substance cannot mean difference in fundamentals. That is to say, a mere observation of a change in the behaviour of substance helps nobody to prove his case. On the contrary, it goes a little against the dialectic materialist. Because the admission of qualitative difference paves the way for admission of "substantial" (pertaining to the substance) difference; it keeps a loop-hole by which matter can be shown to have ultimately been reduced to spirit. Every time a physicist shows you matter behaving differently from what it did before and the spiritualist proclaims, "Matter has now vanished", the dialectic materialist objects saying, "No, matter has not vanished. The principle of matter is still there; the new quality discovered in regard to the movement may be its property hitherto not known". Thus this will go on without an end and they will not know when matter has become spirit. But some spiritualists

may say that by attributing qualitative difference to different stages of matter in motion you have explained nothing but merely stated facts. You have not given any cogent reason for the fact of the qualitative difference in the quantitative saturation brought by movement of matter. Because you do not go beyond matter the movement appears to you purposeless or blind. And even when the self-movement of matter appears on the surface you stop yourself from inferring that this might have been originally there and instead dismiss the fact as a mere qualitative difference without going deeper into the problem. Surely one would like to agree with Max Eastman in saying to Marxists, well, you call yourself scientists but you are denying facts when they come up before you by thrusting your scientific heads in the "metaphysical" sands of your dialectic materialism. Undoubtedly the fact remains that the self-activity in matter is a quality of spirit, and not only that but even the blind movement of matter—which appears to us as blind—is also guided by Consciousness of which also the matter moving blindly is only a form. How this is so has been amply shown in Indian philosophy as revealed by Sri Aurobindo.

The Marxists pride themselves upon the improvement they claim to have made on the old materialism by admitting the fact of evolution, qualitative change of quantity and hence their acceptance of consciousness as a qualitative change in the movement of matter. Thus they do accept evolution, but not a mechanical and monotonous evolution. Theirs is an evolution of matter expressing itself in different qualities. But they fail to satisfy our curiosity as to what is the meaning of quality apart from "That" which it seeks to express. To say that consciousness is a quality is like saying that it is an outward expression of something involved in matter. In fact, what we see in living matter is nothing but a mode of behaviour of that Consciousness which is already involved in it. Sri Aurobindo asks the evolutionists, how can something evolve which is not involved in it? We are, therefore, bound to accept that Consciousness is already involved in Matter; it merely presents itself to outward gaze at a particular stage.

The Marxists may now ask, well, if consciousness is involved in Matter it is clear that Matter bearing consciousness is not fully conscious. It is something different, and if all is Brahman in the last analysis, how did it remain involved in Matter? To this Sri Aurobindo replies, "Matter is the culmination of the

principle of Ignorance". To make it clear he further states, "Here consciousness has lost and forgotten itself in a form of its works as a man might forget in extreme absorption not only who he is, but that he is at all, and become momentarily the work that is being done and the force that is doing it".¹

It will be noticed here that a comparative study of Marxism in relation to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy is only possible because of a parallel stand taken by Marxism and Sri Aurobindo. Just as Marxism admits of consciousness as a qualitative change in the evolution of matter, Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy agrees to give matter its due. Had the latter not affirmed, like other Indian systems, Matter along with Spirit, no point of relation between the two could even have been found for comparative study. It is our contention that while Marxism gives a partially satisfactory view about the correct relation of Matter to Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy gives an integral explanation of the whole problem so that the fallacious position taken by the Marxists is immediately corrected by it.

Take, for instance, cosmic existence. Sri Aurobindo does not deny that, in addition he affirms that there is continual movement in it. But at the same time he refuses to name the materialists' Energy as matter which produces all the varieties. Of course, to human perception the cosmic existence teeming with infinite varieties may be an Indeterminate. But, he says, "in this Infinite the universe itself, whether in its aspect of Energy or its aspect of structure, appears as an indeterminate determination, a 'boundless finite',—paradoxical but necessary expressions which would seem to indicate that we are face to face with a supra-rational mystery as the base of things; in that universe arise—from where?—a vast number and variety of general and particular determinates which do not appear to be warranted by anything perceptible in the nature of the Infinite, but seem to be imposed or, it may be, self-imposed—upon it".² Thus the *why* of nature and its infinite varieties is simply—"Self-imposition".

It may still be questioned whether there is any need at all to posit an Infinite which imposes on itself the work of weaving a universe out of its will. The modern scientists have posited theories about a limitless expanding finite of the material universe, and its teeming determinations. But even these are enigmas to us for they speak of infinite existences, infinite non-

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 371-372.

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 3.

being or boundless finite; that is to say, all these are to us original indeterminates or indeterminables. "We can assign to them no distinct characters or features, nothing which would pre-determine their determinations". The Marxists might describe the fundamental character of the universe as Space or Time or Space-Time. They might argue that these are not abstractions of our intelligence imposed on the cosmos by our limited mental view, still Sri Aurobindo says that these are also indeterminates and carry in themselves no clue to the origin of the determinations that take place in them. As long as they cannot explain the strange process by which things are determined, or of their powers, qualities and properties, mere increase in the terms to explain one by another still more ambiguous will not help us far. The scientist when puzzled by indeterminate Existence revealing itself as an Energy which throws up in its movement a multitude of infinitesimals grouping to form the basis of organised Matter, Life and Consciousness, merely points to Energy or Matter-in-Motion. But energy is here revealed only by its work and not in its frontal appearance. His refusal to admit works as the creation of Consciousness, and Energy as the force of the Consciousness, can only be explained by the fact that he sees only the appearance and shuts his gaze at the Reality. We know only the sequence in facts, but we do not see or know how material movements in a Shakespeare or Plafo, the play of electrons, of atoms, and their resultant molecules, of cells, glands, chemical secretions and physiological processes manage by their activity the composition so famous as Hamlet or the Republic. "The divergence here of determinants and the determination becomes so wide that we are no longer able to follow the process much less understand or utilise. These formulae of Science may be pragmatically correct and infallible, they may govern the practical how of Nature's processes, but they do not disclose the intrinsic how or why; rather they have the air of the formulae of a cosmic Magician, precise, irresistible, automatically successful each in its field, but their rationale is fundamentally unintelligible".³

The Marxists were the first among the materialists to sense the fallacy of one substance giving rise to innumerable varieties, a profuse variation in the generic and individual determinates. And it seemed as if that the new discoveries in science were leading world thought to spiritualism when exactly the Marxists

³ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 7.

stepped in to rejuvenate materialism with its dialectical variety. They would not deny the facts of variation and at the same time they search for a cause for variant determinations. So they argued that it is the quantitative accumulation which is responsible for variant determinations bearing out new qualities. But this has really explained nothing except describing the process—and that too outward—of material evolution. And hence, what is the rationale of these determinates remained still a question as before. So also the emergence of consciousness side by side with the world created by Inconscience is a great mystery and riddle to the human mind. We have seen that mere explanation of a qualitative change in quantitative accumulation leads us nowhere. The play of Inconscience not only reveals mechanical necessity but also the free play of the endless unaccountable variations. Even scientists, notably like James Jeans, perceive a kind of mental order, rational adjustment in the working of the Inconscient. This all leads us to conclude that it cannot be the Inconscient that is the real creator of consciousness but *vice versa*. "A Mind, a Will seems to have imagined and organised the universe, but it has veiled itself behind its creation; its first erection has been this screen of an inconscient Energy and a material form of substance, at once a disguise of its presence and a plastic creative basis on which it could work as an artisan uses for his production of forms and patterns a dumb and obedient material. All these things around us are then the thoughts of an extra-cosmic Divinity,* a Being with an omnipotent and omniscient Mind and Will, who is responsible for the mathematical law of the physical universe, for its artistry of beauty, for its strange play of sameness and variations, of concordances and discords, of combining and intermingling opposites, for the drama of consciousness struggling to exist and seeking to affirm itself in an inconscient universal order."⁴

Marxists, unlike materialists, view the problems of Determinism from a new angle. To the materialists the world is a

* The phrase "extracosmic Divinity" is used here in "The Life Divine" because in that stage of the reasoning nothing more emerged as positively established. In fact, Sri Aurobindo regards the Divinity, the Reality behind and in the universe as at once supracosmic or transcendent of cosmos and immanent in it, and all, constituting the universe by its being, consciousness and force and by that too bringing out from the Inconscient the evolution and developing its stages inevitably according to a truth in things which is its element of necessity and the possibilities of the Consciousness and Force (seen by the human mind as Chance) through which the truth works itself out.

—Editor.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 12.

determined whole working with a predetermined mathematical precision and there is no scope for changing its course in general. But according to the Marxists freedom is the recognition of necessity. They hold that necessity is blind in so far as it is not understood and that freedom does not consist in an imaginary independence of material laws but in a knowledge of these laws and in the possibility thence derived of applying them intelligently to given ends. Freedom of will, therefore, consists in nothing but the ability to come to a decision when one is in possession of a knowledge of facts. This all means one thing that human being can change the course of nature to the extent of his knowledge of the nature. Probably Marxists forget here one thing that the Inconscient has in its womb profuse variations and is thus infinitely free to work on different patterns and processes, that human being is able to choose either this or that according to his needs; that does not mean that human being can choose at random. On the contrary, so long as he remains within the orbit of the movement of the Inconscient he is a slave of it. He can attain real freedom only in a condition when he is able to transcend the Inconscient. But according to the Marxist position how can he transcend that Inconscient of which he is born and to which alone he bears any relation? Thus on a strict Marxist position the latter has achieved nothing over the materialists. If the materialists had tightly chained human freedom to the pole of Natural Necessity, the Marxists have tied only a ring round the pole of Natural Necessity so that the human freedom can move a little freely round the pole in a bit wider circle. But according to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy the Inconscient is not the last and the primary term in Existence; it is an involved form of Consciousness and human being who bears in his heart an eternal portion of that consciousness would get his complete freedom only when he identifies himself with the Consciousness or the Divine; for in that case Man's movement is nothing but Divine Movement; human will is absolutely identified with the Divine Will which not only transcends the Inconscient but moves the Inconscient itself. Real freedom is achieved only at that stage and human being holds that great possibility within itself.

Marxism being a theory predominantly of the workings of the Inconscient, appears correct to minds which view things superficially and pragmatitally. The half-truth in it is due to the fact that in the world and its phenomena the Inconscient

is apparently supreme. Except for the human consciousness, which to them is a freak of nature, blind mechanical necessity working with almost mathematical precision is predominant. It is just natural that many things can be explained,—not their rationale,—by relying on the process of the Inconscient. This is exactly the case when Marxists predict about social revolutions after analysing the economic fabric of the society. They are nearly correct when they see the force behind the economic and political phenomena as the evolution of the Forces of Production. But because they miss the inner cause of the Force, the inner mover of the Inconscient, theirs becomes a theory of Passionless Process instead of the Divine. The immediate cause of world movements are found in the Inconscient which is solely responsible for that. It is consciousness, on the contrary, which has veiled itself that moves all the material forces bringing about geological, atmospheric, social and economic revolutions. And because Marxists fanatically stick to the Passionless Process leading the evolution from lower to higher they expose themselves to a fallacious position as shown by Max Eastman. According to them the world does progress and that too to a desirable and ideal end. The end is to that extent a predetermined one and again it is considered as an ideal also. How can the Marxist then refuse to hold that it is the Divine creating and transcending the world that shapes all things to come?

Again they commit the same fallacy in regard to action they exhort their followers to perform. Because, since they hold that the world process is independent of human being there remains for him to do nothing but become one with the workings of the world which is moving dialectically. Thus it is a complete identification with the Process which is already there and which will be there in spite of themselves. But the human aspiration and the purpose of the Natural Process cannot be one since Marxists make no claim that the human being is identical with the principal force behind nature. Even then they exhort man to identify with the natural necessity of revolution because, after all, that is determined by nature. And if somebody asks them what is the necessity of this exhortation since everything is determined by Natural necessity, they say, you can bring the goal nearer by adding your force to it. But, we may argue, where is the necessity to hasten? What is the value of hastening in a process which is blind and has no ideal to achieve? Thus neither is there an identity of purpose in the human and natural action nor is there any ideal to be achieved by the whole process. Why

then this propaganda? There is no reply forthcoming from the Marxists. They have come to a fallacious position again by their piecing of half-truths of materialism and idealism together. In order to extricate themselves from the fallacious position, either they will have to be orthodox materialists or idealists like Hegel. And if they side with the idealists they will be compelled to agree to the existence of Absolute Consciousness behind all the world phenomena, and human will has to identify with the Divine Will in its creation because ultimately it is one with it, man being a portion of the Divine.

Probably they run away from such a dilemma because of their fear to reconcile the apparently contradictory terms of Consciousness and Matter or Force. But, as we have seen, the fallacious position of Marxists is due to the supposition that Infinite Power can be a mere Force creating a variety of results by itself. It must, on the contrary, be Conscious-Force capable of eternal action and creation, endless truths of its own self-awareness. "Creation would then be a self-manifestation: it would be an ordered deploying of the infinite possibilities of the Infinite. But every possibility implies a truth of being behind it, a reality in the Existent; for without that supporting truth there could not be any possibles".⁵

If once this truth be admitted by the Marxists the rest would be easy for them, for in their battle with the materialists they have already lost ground in favour of the idealists. Of course, Idealism of the type which negates matter or the world altogether holds nothing in common with the Marxists; but idealism which posits matter as real and assigns it a correct place would suit well with those who have realised fallacies in the Marxist philosophy. Sri Aurobindo has singularly achieved the task of showing the synthesis of idealism and materialism. And hence those who are neither orthodox idealists like the illusionists nor materialists like those of Eighteenth Century Europe can well appreciate this great synthesis, which alone is the Integral Truth.

⁵ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 29.

Sri Aurobindo

V. CHANDRASEKHARAM

We hail Sri Aurobindo as the Recoverer and Vivifier of the submerged Soul of India. For, for nearly a thousand years, it has been just stirring, with occasional spurts towards recovery, in a state of death-in-life. The gods, according to a Vedic myth, seek out Agni who had gone into hiding, fleeing in fear from the toil of the invocation and the eternal tramping between gods and men; and they tell him, so goes the story, "Come forth out of the darkness! Man, desirous of the gods, hankers after worship and sacrifice and is waiting all ready. We shall make your life youthful and unaging, so that when yoked to the work of the sacrifice you shall not stumble and come to harm". And even like these gods unto Agni, Sri Aurobindo says to the Soul of India: "Awake from your death-in-sleep and arise! Humanity is desirous of Godhead. I shall make for you a basis of ever fresh and unaging life, so that, however high you may soar—whether it be into that azure sky of the vast unbounded consciousness where it is ever in mystic meditation, or into its charged fields of golden lightnings wherefrom issue the cosmic energies, or into the very centre of the blazing Sun of the Supreme Spirit,—you shall not fall down to the earth exhausted".

Surprise awaits us at the very start of the career of this great son of Mother India; for such was his up-bringing and education and almost so complete was his lack of acquaintance with his country, its speech and its ways that, when he came home from England a fully formed young man, he had to begin picking up his mother-tongue for the first time. What a strange apprenticeship for the greatest exponent of India's authentic ancient tradition of spiritual culture! Certainly a rare phenomenon, but there seems to be something like a parallel in the history of the renaissance of modern China. A well-known Chinese author now, when a child he was very much isolated from the influences of Chinese life and customs and traditions and was afterwards educated in a foreign land on the other side of the world, almost in entire ignorance of his country and its ways,—it is he who has been acclaimed as having revealed the

soul of Chinese culture and tradition to the world and to China itself. The perils are obvious in this kind of transplantation into the soil and climate of a foreign culture; but perhaps, as a compensation, there are some virtues which may be derived from it. One in the present conditions of the world is the opportunity which the countries of the West where life is in flood-tide provide for full growth—growth to one's full strength and stature; and another is that one is enabled to look upon the past and present of one's own country with a fresh mind unbiassed by garbled traditions and a keen vision unblunted by familiarity. But whatever the dangers or advantages that may lie in this kind of abnormal upbringing and education, Sri Aurobindo's career proves in a spectacular way that it is nature that prevails over nurture; and by nature we mean the nature of the soul which robes itself in this carnal body for its sojourn on the earth.

When he burst upon the view of his countrymen for the first time it was in the guise of a fearless warrior of the Motherland, the torch of her ancient and eternal wisdom fresh-alight held aloft in his hand, sweeping the country from end to end. For, by now he had dived into the depths of India's soul and got hold of its warrior-wisdoms. Weakness of spirit is his sworn enemy and he fights it with weapons from knowledge's armoury. He does not play upon the feelings of patriotism of his hearers or dazzle them with visions of India's vanished glory. If India has fallen, it is owing to a failure of vision. It is not due to her meekness, to her goodness, to her spiritual preoccupations. It is weakness of spirit that goes under these guises and even obtains credentials from others, with the supreme cunning which only the art of self-deception can teach. He can condone anything, for even in evil he sees what is there of good, but weakness of spirit, never.

For at this period he was living the Bhagavad Gita in his life—that marvellous symbolic converse between the World-Teacher and man, seeking and in distress. The Gita is a live spring of spiritual force and health, which it gives to all those who come to drink of it. In its stream that appears to be crystal clear are concealed depths under depths of ever-deepening meaning. Its first and final injunction is: Cast away all weakness and be ever the true warrior of the Spirit. Yet what have we extracted out of this great Scripture? Truncated philosophies, emasculated creeds and shallow dogmas. Some make the Gita say: "Action is a deceitful trick of the energy which we call

Nature. The Spirit is actionless. Action is ignorance and illusion. Man is Spirit. He must therefore rise out of the illusion of action into the truth of actionlessness. This is salvation, this is deliverance, this is recovery of his true and eternal status which is merely obscured by a beginningless power of Ignorance and Illusion. Give up all works. Discriminate between the true and false and arrive at the true knowledge. This is the supreme way to the Truth, the way of Knowledge. All other ways are inferior. But it is not given for everyone to walk on this way. Until you can do it and so that you can do it, discharge the duties of the Vedic commandment to which your birth and your station in life call you."

Others make the Gita say: "The path of love and devotion to God is the highest path, for it is only His grace that can lead man from this world of misery into the beatitude of His Presence. Knowledge or works can help in creating the right conditions for love and devotion to appear, but they have no direct efficacy. It is only love that unlocks the gates of the Divine Felicity." Yet others make the Gita say that works of the Vedic commandment performed with knowledge and devoutness take man to his highest state. And so on. And all of them build an appropriate structure of philosophy as a pedestal for their tenets. And some modern thinkers have not hesitated to dilute the Gita to such an extent as to say that it lays down performance of one's duties and works of altruism as its preferred path that leads to the Highest Good.

But what is the teaching of the Gita? It advocates all these paths—the path of dedicated will and works, the path of spiritual knowledge and the path of devotion. It recognises no conflict or gradation among them. It puts its soul with equal fervour into each of these paths and shows that any one of them rightly used can lead to the goal. But it shows its unmistakable preference for their being made confluent and each enriching and purifying the others. It aims at a full divine bloom of the triple flower of understanding, will and feeling of the soul.

The Gita builds a spacious Way of Works in which all activities of life, however trivial, are made into so many flowers of offering placed at the feet of the Divine. Works bind, the Gita recognises. Is it because of the doctrine of retribution? We feel that in some inexplicable way we reap what we sow. There is mysterious Nemesis, whose scales of justice are indeed a stumbling block to our moral sense, and yet who seems, through inscrutable ways, to visit the results of our deeds upon us. Well,

if so, a gospel of good works—works of duty and works of altruism—would meet the situation. Even if we do not believe in retribution at all and feel that man should do good without any selfish considerations, even then a gospel of good works would be adequate. For man would march forward through his good works. But the Gita goes much deeper.

We tie ourselves in knots through our works—even through ethically good works. Our activity cuts grooves in which it gradually gets confined. We act at the behest of desire. First, there is its lashing which sets us to work for some object. Then, there is the wrong absorption and engrossment of ourselves in the doing of the work. At the end, there is wailing or jubilation, according to failure or success. In this way doing our works, we are distracted and thrown off our true centre. And there is no ceasing of desire. Restless desire starting action, self-forgetful involvement in the doing of it and sorrow or happiness in the result of the action—where is the issue out of this mechanical round? This is Nature's technique of action; that is, it is how Nature sends us to work. But there is a way of doing works without their binding us. We may engage ourselves in action without any falling away from our true centre. We may do works in freedom of soul, without Nature driving us in her round. But, for this, we have to acquire a skill, the skill of Karma Yoga, the Way of Works.

The Gita asks the seeker to proceed step by step, beginning with the easiest. First, let him allow himself no personal interest or claim in the fruits of his action, by dedicating them to the Divine. Then let him detach himself from involvement in the doing of action. In order to do this let him look upon all activity of his nature as a play of Nature's forces, a small fraction of her universal play. Finally, let him try to eliminate desire and put in its place the will of the Universal Spirit who holds the movements of the cosmic forces to their ordained goals. Without desire, then, does not action cease altogether? No. A purer action, one more powerfully driven and more enlightened—that is what ensues. This is what is called acting through Yoga, Yoga which is skill in works. And what higher skill can there be than to be able to make of all the out-going energy of action of the human being an instrument of his liberation and freedom and to hitch it to the will of the Cosmic Spirit—the energy which, as it is, only works for poor ephemeral results and then succeeds in forging unseen fetters for the soul through which it works! By this way of works man reaches his goal and

lives in the Spirit. Works in slavery to Nature—it is they that vanish on man's attainment to knowledge and works in freedom of Spirit take their place.

It is not very difficult to understand the Gita's paths of knowledge and love, if we do not bring with us well-cultivated prejudices of special dogmas. The Gita does not feel obliged to treat the many as unreal in order to establish the reality of the One-without-a-second. It does not feel obliged to treat individuality as illusory in order to justify its ultimate aim of mergence in the ineffable Spirit. It does not advocate spiritual isolationism, for isolationism, in every sphere of life, is a slow but sure mode of self-slaying. First peace and purity, then detachment and even vision, and finally the thousand-faceted experience of the One in and beyond the Many. This is the Gita's path of Knowledge. And no weak revel in the surges of vital emotion and no debilitating turbulence of tears and hallelujahs and surely no path of roses is its path of Love and Devotion. It is a path which more than the others is sharp like a blade-edge, instantly punishing all unwariness. For love can put forth its purest blossom only in a hard and gritty soil of renunciation. The Gita's path of Love is severe, austere, Aryan. First a giving-up—a giving-up to the Lord of all that one has and gets, of all that one does or enjoys; then a constant dwelling upon Him; finally surrender, perfect and blissful, culminating in union with the Divine. And throughout the patient teaching of the different paths comes ordering, from time to time, like a refrain, a stern command of divine urgency: cast away weakness of spirit and give battle—the same divine command which is there at its beginning and close and which we seem to hear as some sacred thunder rolling overhead and spanning, as it were, the entire teaching.

It is with this teaching that Sri Aurobindo vitalised the sinews of India and illumined its darkened soul. It was long after that he gave to the world the first right and adequate interpretation of this sacred book in his *Essays on the Gita*, whose first and highest virtue is its extraordinary power of inspiration. Yet already, there is ample evidence in his speeches and writings that the Gita has delivered up to him its full meaning.* But

* It is strange that a book written in such simple language as the Gita should have become the battle-ground for the greatest host ever there was of differing interpreters. We are not thinking of the difficulties one may get into with its metaphysics. It is no matter for surprise that a book with such powerful germinal ideas on final problems should inspire diverse metaphysical constructions. Fashions keep changing and tastes go on differ-

we have dwelt at such length upon the Gita, mainly because Sri Aurobindo's life is a bodying forth of its harmonious ideal and, therefore, to speak on the Gita is, in a way, to speak about Sri Aurobindo. Ever a warrior of the Spirit, he is also a seeker of God through the austere ways of knowledge and the ardent ways of love. Ability to pour out the soul's energy into channels of wide and intense action; an original mind, far-reaching and comprehensive in thinking power and fine in penetration; a high heart of emotion,—not of that kind which supplies an exciting breath of fervour and passion to cold thought, but one which, bright and serene, all thinking suffuses with a living warmth and glow which completely convince and satisfy, the warmth and glow of its own life and vision—this already is Sri Aurobindo as we see him at this period. Such a complete endowment is a rare thing in Nature; occurring once or twice perhaps in a thousand years. For our great men, our world-shapers, are strong in one side of their nature at the expense of the other sides; they tend to be relatively narrow, if not 'single-track' minds, and, speaking without the least irreverence, not too rarely, something of cranks. These seem to be Nature's devices to get the necessary concentration and drive for the energies of the soul and then to get them applied to a given work. When men like a Da Vinci or a Goethe make their appearance, men who have not only the stature of greatness but also a full and rich personality powerful on every one of its fronts, they make a tremendous impression. Sri Aurobindo belongs to this order. And what is more and rarer, he has turned the powers of his rich personality into the field of high spiritual endeavour. He is one marked as it were by Nature to make a fine and noble illustration of the complete and integral ideal of the Gita.

ing—even in metaphysics. But the Gita leaves the problem of fully working out its metaphysical syntheses, such as the unacting yet active Self, the personal-impersonal Supreme, not to logic but to spiritual experience to be arrived at by its integral discipline. One might as well follow this procedure as the right one for the purpose. But what is a matter for surprise is the battles royal that have been fought over what is after all a matter of textual interpretation—how to construe the verses, how to paragraph them, how to find out where a topic ends and another begins, and thus to decide what discipline it is that the book teaches : whether withdrawal from life or active participation ; whether or not it gives preference to Sankhya over Yoga or to Yoga over Sankhya, etc. ; whether or not it gives a clear award of superiority to one among the three paths of Works, Knowledge and Love ; or whether it believes at all in placing the apple of discord before these three paths ; and so on. But the bewildering variety of interpretation and comment on the Gita conveys one lesson to us with utmost force—what a tremendously difficult thing for the human mind it is to have no bias, how even thinkers of rare abilities fail, especially where their love or reverence is concerned, to keep the instrument of thought pure of all predilection and prejudice.

We can clearly see that the Lord's Song took hold of his life and shaped it anew. But we would give much to know what he was like before this master influence touched him at the dawn of his career—how he spoke and what it was that he spoke, how he moved and what his manner was. But this much we can safely say—the vessel was fit for the afflatus. And, with great respect, we shall permit ourselves to venture a surmise from what indications we have: the experience of the witnessing consciousness wherefrom radiate the paths of Light leading to the Supreme Reality and to which one usually arrives through the labours of a whole life-time was, from the time he turned his look inwards, within easy reach of him, hidden by the thinnest of veils; he was, so to say, born to it.

It was a most fortunate thing that when Sri Aurobindo took up the Gita he did not fall for any of the current schools of its interpretation. An Indian youth seeking help in face of the world mystery naturally turns to the Gita; but what happens is that it is not its own voice that he hears but something of it as had been caught and recorded by the school of philosophy and religion to which his family is born or which prevails in his environment. And then step by step his thinking follows the pattern set for it by his school, and his adventure into the world mystery ends in his being absorbed into a school or creed. It is everywhere so in the wide world, a great Scripture rarely gets the chance of being confronted by a fresh and original mind not already under the spell of some traditional formula on it and not broken in to its special ways of thought. But it is this rare thing that happened when Sri Aurobindo took up the Gita, the Upanishads and later on the Veda. And now the world knows with what result.

Sri Aurobindo has been called a poet-philosopher. A poet-philosopher is usually a risky combination. For the poet works through his æsthetic perception, through his sensibility, feeling and sympathy, and the philosopher through his faculty of thought-mind, intellect, imagination. The poet often trips up the philosopher in his logical steps, and the downward pull of the philosopher's syllogisms makes the poet's flights unsteady and grotesque. But it is only on the lower levels of their power that this conflict exists between the poet and the philosopher. On the higher levels of their power, the poet-philosopher is a most happy combination—the marriage of a male and female power bringing to birth most fruitful visions of the truth of things. Such is Sri Aurobindo and such is the

great author of the Gita; and such, though with a striking difference in the purely subsidiary role which intellect plays and the peculiar symbolic manner in which it works, are the seers of the Upanishads. The Vedic Rishis show a near affinity with the seers of the Upanishads; yet their regard on existence is exclusively psychic and mystic—a regard in which intellectual appreciation plays no noticeable part, but in which a most high power of æsthetic symbolic perception seems to ensoul imagination. And therefore naturally Sri Aurobindo has succeeded, as in our view none others have done, in reaching to the heart of their great creations.

We go to the great scriptures for the waters of Life, but the commentators send us away with stone-hard dogma. Their help is much needed and usually they are men of the highest abilities and some of them are great men whose influence is sure to last for ever; and it would seem ungraceful to make complaints against them. But their attempt to state in intellectual form the intuitive thought of the Scriptures often impairs its integrity and sometimes sterilizes it; and too often its beauty suffers hurt through rough dialectical handling. How can we suppress our cry of pain when we see that, in their preoccupation to build out of the inspired utterances of Scripture finished philosophical structures complete to the last detail, the commentators seem to be growing unaware of the beauty which is their life-breath? For here, if nowhere else, is beauty truth, and to miss the beauty is to miss the truth. We may bring out the underlying ideas of the inspired utterances of the Rishis with keen analytical skill, collate them and make of them a consistent scheme. But if our hearts do not respond to the surprise of their rare beauty, which is there not only in the delicate poise which the thought assumes as it shapes itself on the brink of the fathomless mysteries to communicate to us something of their secret, but also informs the very sound in which it is bodied forth with its grace and rhythm, we may be sure that we have lost the very soul of the thought, and however much we may analyse we are not going to reach it. How tyrannical the claims of the systematising mind have become we can see when Bādarāyaṇa seriously takes up the question whether the Rishis and the gods too are entitled to the study and practice of the Vedantic knowledge and disciplines taught by the Scripture. No one can fail to be impressed by the great qualities of many of our commentators. But very often, as we see them at work we feel, to borrow the simile of a mediaeval Hindi poet, that it is like a connoisseur of precious stones

entering a lovely flower-garden to appraise the various qualities of the flowers.

It is necessary that we realise what this spirit of mechanical logic has done to us. For in the ratio that it grew in strength the vitality of India decreased. It is in its python coils that her living mind has for too long been held inert and helpless. We look aghast at the endless discussions on minutiae of a bygone age, the discussions such as, for example, on the question whether the sacrificial ladle is to be made out of this or that wood, and wonder at the immense weight of logical armament thrown into this deadly issue. We wonder how strong the grip on the present is of the dead past. But what is wrong with the past? We can take what is there of good in it and crush out the bad. But it is this spirit of mechanical logic that is wrong and it is that which is the enemy of life. It has invaded even our common ways of devotion and worship. O ye gods! Will it be believed when we say that we actually heard an elderly lady earnestly reciting the definitions of the three types of *lakṣaṇā*,—*jahat*, *ajahat* and *jahadajahat*—while pouring her offering of water on to the leaves of the sacred basil! For, without these definitions, how could she understand the precise significance of what happens when the copula joins the subject with the predicate in the great sentence, *Tat Tvam Asi*—Thou Art That!

When mind grows feeble and forgetful, life goes on in a mechanical round, whose issue is death. But when there remain an insistent pressure of the past in the memory and some glimmer of self-recognition, it invents senseless patterns of repetitive behaviour and goes on trammelling itself in them, much like a delirious patient who makes a winding sheet for himself of his bed-clothes; and of which too the issue still is death, but death by one's own hand. From time to time heroic efforts have been made to rescue India from this fate. Our renaissance has been possible because of the great men that began to appear from about the middle of the last century. Anything like satisfactory or lasting success has not yet been achieved, but we believe it is in sight. Sri Aurobindo helped to rouse his countrymen from their forgetfulness and to give them a new hope and daring through his rare spiritual energy, by means of the written or spoken word, and by drawing them together around a common purpose and a common thought. This is not the place to deal with his contribution to the political movement of the time. His was the endeavour to switch it to the spiritual motive power of the race. He had already begun his great work of opening up the

lines of communication to the treasures of the ancient mystic knowledge overlaid or blocked up for ages, through the disciplines of Yoga. And it is these disciplines that call him away from the political field and he springs a big surprise on his countrymen. He who had been non-chalantly riding a fierce political storm disappears into his 'hermit's cave' at Pondicherry and India hears nothing of him for a time.

Something of the nature of the work in which he has been engaged and something of his achievement we now know through his published writings. He has recovered the Soul of India. He has entered into the heart of her mystic knowledge and has brought back for us its right meaning and significance. With an insight at which we simply marvel, he unravels the words of the Rishis. He does not speak as one of the scribes, but as one with authority. And he has given us a new Philosophy and a new Yoga.

We regard the Age of the Rishis as the fountain-head of our culture in all its subsequent manifestations and developments. We give the names of Muni and Āchārya and even Bhagavān to the great founders and exponents of our philosophical systems, but there is no word which tugs at our hearts with such force as this sublime word Rishi. For he is the Soul of India at its purest and highest activity. How long ago this age was we have no means of knowing with any worth-while definiteness, but everyone makes his own guess. Not even a potsherd has come down to us from this age, except its priceless gifts of the mind. Ritual worship, religious emotion and spiritual seeking represented the chief interest of the men of the age, but surely they must have had other interests besides. About them we can only make the haziest inferences. Even the monumental literary productions that have come down to us appear to be a mere fraction of the vast actual output. No wonder, then, that opinions and appraisals here clash as with regard to no other period of our history.

Again, we the sons of an intellectual age are out of sympathy with this age of the Rishis in the hoary past. It is almost impossible for us to put ourselves in touch with them so that they can communicate their thought to us. It is not difficult to do this with the author of the Gita, for example. He too is a mystic seer, but also an intellectual. We approach him in a receptive mood and come into rapport with him easily and then all his apparent contradictions get resolved and we find his vast comprehensive thought hanging together beautifully. We

follow its movement as it goes forth in a first forward sweep, and then keeps coming back upon itself again and again, all the while enlarging and deepening; and as it eddies round mutually opposing views and finally carries them into the unity of a deeper principle of harmony. But we are unable to gain this kind of close contact with the mind of the Rishis. The mystic seer Sri Aurobindo seems to be able to get into rapport with them with an amazing facility.

We have not as yet a right account of the development of ancient Indian thought, either from traditional commentators or from Western scholars. There are a few who literally believe that every word that has come down to us from the age of the Rishis is the word of God. Such happy innocence of belief is beyond the reach of many. Even if it were not, it does not seem to be a good thing to possess; for, taking the very account of the ritual worship of the Veda given by those who are upholders of this belief, we do not see much that is edifying in this endless petitioning for cows. Or, coming to the Upanishads, say, for example, shall we accept trial by ordeal as the right way of detecting crime, because it seems to be mentioned there as a method then in vogue? The belief that the age of the Rishis was an age of revelatory knowledge is sound. But the crude, literal way this belief is applied to the vast literature of the age, sacred, sacerdotal and philosophic, or ritualistic, occult and magical, is disastrous to that belief itself: the logic of events showed this for once by raising up the vehement protest of the Buddhistic movement. To-day perhaps this type of belief can be glorified and urged with some impunity, for now the question of its truth has become almost entirely academic; our way of life is not built on the faith and injunctions of the ritualism of the Vedavādins—the fanatics of the external cult and latter of the Veda whom Sri Krishna mercilessly castigates at the very commencement of delivering his New Dispensation of a renovated Yoga.

From the twilight of primitive ignorance into the noon-day light of modern knowledge, of the age of positive Reason and the exact Sciences—this is the story of man's mental development according to modern thinkers, and Western savants try to fit in the Vedic Age as an early portion of this long story. But there is here a dangerous over-simplification of theme. It is quite probable that our scientific knowledge of today is the highest the world has seen, and positive Reason has developed the most efficient technique of investigating its subject-matter

that man has ever used ; but on that account we cannot say that we now have the fullest light of all kinds of knowledge. Our knowledge of material Nature has increased, but our knowledge of spiritual Nature has not correspondingly risen. On the contrary, it seems to have fallen lower than in certain other periods of man's history. Positive Reason may open to us the knowledge of material Nature, but to open to us the knowledge of spiritual Nature another instrument would seem to be needed. If some period in history witnessed the greatest progress in the development of this instrument and, as a consequence, if that period possessed man's highest knowledge of spiritual Nature, our simple theme of man's development has to be substantially altered. And precisely, the Age of the Rishis is the Age of Intuition, the instrument of Spiritual Knowledge, the age when man seems to have reached farthest into the secrets of spiritual Nature.

Some modern Indian scholars seem to be trying to arrange a sort of compromise between tradition and Western savants, but their efforts are bound to fail in view of the fundamental opposition between the two outlooks. Following the Western savants, they try to trace a gradual development in thought, moral sentiment, religious feeling, spiritual and philosophic perception from the earliest hymns of the Rig Veda, through the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas, to their culmination in the Upanishads. They represent the Vedic Rishis as something of Nature poets of a pastoral age, who worshipped the wonders of earth and sky in the shapes of innumerable gods through a very complex ritual, and all that for the sake of rain and pasture, food, cattle and progeny. They seek to show how the Rishis had gradually advanced so far as to conceive of their highest divinity as the guardian not only of natural but even of moral law. In the latest hymns, we are assured, are found the germs of a question or two about ultimate issues. But then, gradually, ritual itself became so important as almost to usurp the place of the divinities for whom it was intended, and the Brāhmaṇas represent the period of its full sway. By the time of the Āraṇyakas, however, the spell of ritual was being broken and there comes to appear some brisk speculation about philosophical problems. And of this intellectual activity the Upanishads are the peak. But unfortunately this chain of gradual development as it is traced from the Veda to the Upanishad seems to be wholly artificial and unconvincing, to be all imaginary. The chain is more a thing of missing links than of connecting

links. For how can from such origins as the Vedic hymns be represented to be, spring up the high thought of the Upanishads, with just the intervening phase of an external cult of rites? Our modern scholars seem to be wavering on where to place the highest point of the development of Indian thought, whether in Sankara, Ramānuja, Madhwa, etc. as the case may be, or in the original Upanishads themselves. And their difference from the Western savants seems to consist in this: they tend to show a little more regard to the Vedic Rishis—for what reason it is difficult to say; it is perhaps for the primitiveness of their thoughts and feelings—and, decidedly, a greater esteem for the intellectual achievements of the Upanishads.

But their so-called rational explanation of the Upanishadic knowledge seems to be as inadequate as the account they give of the Vedic hymns. What is this Upanishadic knowledge,—is it the fruit of daring speculation? Is it by a bold leap of thought that the Upanishadic thinkers alighted upon their great affirmations? Accepting for a moment that intellectual thought could achieve that, where is its preparatory development that would warrant such a conclusion? Or is it that our valuation of the Upanishadic knowledge is hopelessly biassed and we see in its speculations and imaginations, good in their own way, immensely more than what there really is? But no, the knowledge has been confirmed, at least the core of it, by the experience of mystics all over the world and up and down time. The affirmations of the Upanishadic thinkers are realizations gained in true mystic experience. Take, for example, one of their great affirmations, *Annam Brahman*, Matter is Brahman. Of course they do not say it in the sense in which a physicist might say it, though the first approach to the truth which is indicated to the disciple is something like that of a Natural philosopher's. For they declare that *Brahman* is Boundless Being, Fount of Happiness, and Light of Seeing, all in one. So they mean, Matter too is this Brahman, this Spirit. We can imagine how difficult it would be for a thinker to say this of Matter, for Matter easily gets into disrepute with a thinker; it becomes vile for him. It is only the slow and steady advance of modern Science that has been able to rehabilitate Matter; it is one of Science's great achievements. Even for us of the present-day who have this acquisition of reverence for great Matter, it is extremely difficult to hold this affirmation even as an idea—Matter is Brahman. And in that early age, when man, we are told, walked in fear and ignorance of Nature's phenomena,

it is impossible, when we come to think of it, that this affirmation could have been made through speculative daring. It was through intuition, through mystic experience, that this affirmation was reached. It is the same with their central affirmation, the affirmation of unity, of the One-without-a-second.

Now, these Upanishadic thinkers often speak of a tradition handed down to them from the past, *iti śuśrūma*, incorporate the *mantras* of the Vedas in their discourses and quote the authority of the Rishis to reinforce their teaching and make it more readily acceptable. Are they indulging in a piece of self-deception while filling old bottles with new wine? Surely no, they are of sterner stuff than that. They give no excessive value to Vedic learning, train the disciple not to the mastery of any sacred literature but to the knowledge by which the highest Reality is reached and to all the knowledge on the way which rests on the clear evidence of one's own experience. And they speak of the rite of sacrifice as "a raft that is frail". They are quite clear about what they are going to receive from the Vedic Rishis. The Upanishadic thinkers regard them as mystic seers who had attained to the Truth and not as poetic but greedy worshippers of the gods for gain. The only conclusion that is now possible is that the age of the Upanishads was the culmination of a great Age of Intuition, of the Age of the Rishis.

A true account of the development of Indian thought is not possible without a proper understanding of this age of the Rishis, of India's mystics. We have perforce to place an age of Intuition before the age of philosophical speculation. It is so in India and may be so even in Europe. Probably, as between intuition and ratiocination, intuition was the stronger element in human intelligence in some very early phase of its growth and reached its full development in due course where circumstances favoured it. It is perhaps only when its decadence had set in after its cycle of growth and maturity, that the other element of ratiocination had its chance. We believe that a deep and sympathetic study of the mind of the extant primitive tribes would be quite favourable to such a view. In that case, some of the most important chapters of the Science of Religion would have to be re-written. From a dim but direct perception of the mystery of God chiefly, religion would have to be derived and not from fear. And we shall certainly preserve that amusing witticism of Voltaire which makes religion to be born from the encounter of the first fool with the first knave, but confine its application to all the fool-knave business that

creeps into every religion. Any way, if our theories of man's mental development do not fit in with known facts, surely it is not the facts that have got to be altered.

Sri Aurobindo has given us the key to the understanding of this age of the Rishis. It is now possible to understand the true significance of the Vedic worship. It was a high spiritual endeavour in which the Rishis sought to liberate the cabined human consciousness into the all-embracing divine consciousness of Aditi, the Indivisible, the Infinite. The agent of this endeavour was the divine energy of will in the human being. The endeavour expressed itself, and expressing fulfilled itself, in a symbolic ritual brimming over with life. But there seems to intervene a yawning gap between this period of the *Mantra* and that of the *Brāhmaṇa*; for there the informing life of the ancient ritual has almost vanished, the true significance of its elaborate symbolism has been somehow lost and we are slipping into a dead and deadening ritualism. But along some bridges of communication which must have once existed and later collapsed the ancient spiritual endeavour reaches into the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*, continues, and begins to develop on new lines; for there emerges in this period, for the first time, the distinguishing doctrine of Indian Spirituality, the doctrine of Brahman-Atman. It is these new lines of development that find their fulfilment in the period of the Upanishads.

The Upanishadic thinkers do not aim at all at building philosophical systems. Yet the Upanishads are not a mess or medley of stray thoughts and speculations. Though they represent the work of many seer-thinkers and of different generations, there is always a unity of vision in the background. We must not forget that the Upanishadic thinkers were essentially poets, poets of the Infinite. Out of their intuitive and integral seeing arises a body of thought, which it is not very difficult to ascertain, but there is variation of emphasis on some aspect of the truth of their seeing from thinker to thinker, depending on mood or temperament. An aggressive, vehement and exuberant personality like Yāgnavalkya might easily give a pronounced personal turn to the thinking on the great truths of the age, in order to bring to the fore some aspect of them which in his view needed the utmost emphasis. But we feel all through that, at least as regards the central truths, there is no irreconcilable opposition of thought between different thinkers, in spite of certain extreme statements one way or other. It is not by sheer hazard, we should think, that the small Great Upanishad, the

Īśāvāsya, is given the place of honour in our collection of the Upanishads. It is the key to the synthetic thought, which is ever the natural outcome of an integral vision, of the Upanishads. And surprisingly enough, but as is to be expected from what we have said before, its true significance has been missed by the systematisers of the Upanishadic thought from Bādarāyaṇa downwards. It is again through Sri Aurobindo's original commentary on this work that we are able to understand the harmonising character of its thought and its vast sweep. For Sri Aurobindo's thinking has a marvellous power of resilience, almost magical in its results; we realise it as he takes up stark opposites and reconciles them in a most natural way without trace of a tour-de-force. It is this powerful faculty of synthesis that enables him to bring out the deep harmony of the Upanishadic thought without impairing its integrity. Upon much that is obscure in the Upanishadic symbolism he throws the light of the Veda. We consequently reach to a better comprehension of the Upanishads than it had been ever possible to do before.

We shall here make the confession, however, that we do not regard the construction of a philosophical system out of the Upanishads as a matter of the most vital importance at all. It is not that we do not love great speculations, for thought should be released as often as possible from its constant cramping service to our day-to-day needs, either worldly or spiritual. Great speculations give it this release, and make it disinterested, strong and austere. But when the mind reaches a clear sense of its own limitations, when it finds that it falls into staggering perplexities over the idea of time, of space, of matter, it learns humility and gives up the vain attempt unaided to encompass the Supreme Principle of existence within its scope. But yet, if thinkers, starting from some basic concepts, however, mysterious or difficult to conceive they may be, like, for example, ether, gravity, Space-Time or Absolute and Māyā, succeed in bringing to the mind a greater elucidation of our experience, we shall always be thankful to them. All philosophies aim to do this. The Māyāvāda, however, seems intent upon achieving the opposite result, for we are assured that, according to it, it is our experience, our world, that is *anirvacanīya*, not understandable, not definable, while the Absolute is *nirvacanīya*, is a thing of which a clear definition is possible. It appears to us that Sankara's system, contrary to the very generally held opinion, is mainly pragmatic in its interest. Considered in this

way, his philosophy becomes more of a discipline—a great, forceful and even a storming kind of discipline, for natures that can 'take it' safely. In India most of the systems take their basic concepts from the Upanishads and each philosopher claims that it is his system which is implied by them. So two questions arise as regards these systems, whether new or old: what special elucidation do they bring and how far is their claim of faithfulness to the Upanishads justified. We have already expressed our opinion on the second question. As to the question of bringing new and greater elucidation of experience, it may be claimed that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy succeeds in a greater measure than all the previous systems.

If good people feel hurt in their love and reverence for our great teachers of the past and their systems, let them forgive us; for we intend no disparagement at all. Sri Aurobindo himself does not bring disparagement or destructive criticism to their famous systems. He brings, on the other hand, sympathetic understanding and penetrating insight and shows how they arise from various diverging lines of spiritual experience. There lies their deathless vitality and not at all in the logical strength of their philosophical structures. High praise is bestowed, within India and outside, upon Sankara for instance, for what is called the logical perfection of his philosophical system. But to us it appears that the original sin of wrong premises runs throughout, cracking the structure from pinnacle to plinth. Still, we often take up his commentaries—on the Sutras, the Upanishads and the Gita; we find ourselves getting into conflict with his arguments, yet feel that he is easily the most acute, lucid, deep and, in a very important respect, most close in spirit to the originals, of all our mediaeval philosophers. His logic does not satisfy us, but, mysteriously, well-being flows into us from his words and, in his discourse, there is the fire by which a great Teacher is revealed. We say this, not to air our personal reaction to this most indefatigably active spiritual warrior who preached withdrawal and quiescence as the highest ideal, but to draw a general conclusion from it. The best and strongest logical systems of our great teachers may crumble, but the spiritual life that raised them will go on undying, and will incarnate in other forms. And Sri Aurobindo comes to fulfil and not to destroy.

We are here merely concerned to note the general character of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. We have said before that he has given us a new Philosophy and a new Yoga. We do not

mean to say that they are entirely new, but that they mark a fresh, new growth from the tap-root of Indian Spirituality which goes deep into the age of the Rishis. Sri Aurobindo starts from the basic concepts of Spirit-Absolute and Involution-Evolution, the same that have most clearly and definitely emerged in the Upanishads. Involution-Evolution is the mode in which the power of the Absolute becomes active, that is, expresses itself. So, creation is self-expression of the Absolute. The Absolute is absolute because it is not bound by its self-expression and it remains the Absolute both in and beyond the self-expression. But how about these contradictions between the Absolute and the self-expression? They are all incidents to the modes of the activity. The contradiction is most stupendous on the material level, most distressful in life and most poignant on the mind plane. Involution brings the contradiction to a head, evolution is the effort to resolve the contradiction. Evolution is the steady manifestation, in ever enhanced degree and kind, of involved energies. Along with the enhancement in manifestation there is re-integration of the already achieved basis of self-expression. The highest status of the activity of the power of the Absolute is designated by Sri Aurobindo as Super-mind. Here all contradiction is entirely resolved. This is the Wisdom and Power and Bliss of God, this the great link between boundless Being above and divided Being below. In it is the perfect self-expression of divine existence. Man can reach the Super-mind, arrive at integral God-knowledge and bring down its power for the transmutation of his entire being—not only for the transmutation of the human consciousness but for the transmutation also of its vital and material basis. And he can bring it down not only for himself but for humanity also. When that is achieved there will be for him and humanity—‘the life Divine’. That is man’s greatest fulfilment and that is the aim of Nature’s endeavour in him.

How to achieve this transformation? It is by the methods of the integral Yoga. The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo is not an adjustment into a new harmony and system of the different methods of the various yogas. Its distinguishing character lies in the spirit of integrality which vitalizes and directs the methods that it uses. We have seen that the Gita stands for an integral vision and an integral discipline. Sri Aurobindo goes much farther than the Gita, for he sees the goal of human effort as the divinisation, through the Power of the Super-Mind, of human life here on earth. All Yoga has three fundamental

movements—the first is the effort to reach the power and wisdom of God and establish permanent contact with it, then, to make over to it what we are without reservation, and lastly, to work out the transformation of our nature with the knowledge and energy so released. These three movements have to go on together from the beginning, perfecting themselves endlessly. But different yogas choose different parts or sides of our nature as the special instrument through which to gain contact with the higher Power and Wisdom. The Hatha-yoga chooses the psycho-vital energy of our nature, the Rāja-yoga selects the mental energy, the Karma-yoga the Will active in works, the Bhakti-yoga the heart of love and devotion, the Jñāna-yoga the discernment and thought-power of the purified higher Reason, the Tantra the psychic imagination and the psychic will. And they differ in their aims and in the methods they follow to reach them. The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo may use some or many of their methods, but because of the different character of the vision from which it starts and of the goal to which it presses forward, the same methods naturally acquire a different operation and significance in the new setting.

The integral yoga regards Nature as neither a conjureess nor a temptress, but as a mother who does her best for her sons in the straitened circumstances of earthly life. To them that understand the desire of her high heart and, with courage and adventure, labour to remove the wrong of circumstance and vow to offer to her the fulfilment of her heart's desire, she unveils her divine face. And with that vision, there can be no labour that can be unfruitful and labour ceases to be labour. The integral yoga leads the seeker to this vision. As its aim is not withdrawal or quiescence, but works of divine knowledge which flow from the Peace of the Spirit that passeth understanding and as it regards self-liberation only as a step in lifting humanity to a divine life, it does not cut off the seeker from his fellowmen except in the measure necessary to all life of intense effort. It does not limit itself to working through a single side of our nature as the specialised methods of Yoga do, but takes up all sides of our nature and all its special bents—artistic, literary, social, etc., and turns them all into the movement of aspiration. Whatever the parts of our nature that happen to have the necessary fitness to be used for its preliminary energising, it would prefer an early drive withinwards so as to reach their basis in intuition, for all sides of our life, all parts of our nature, have an intuitive basis. Through some side of his outer nature the

seeker is made to reach his intuitive being. The aspiration of the intuitive being is more powerful and it easily cuts an opening in his mental covering, enabling him to make contact with the Divine. And then follow a constantly and endlessly self-perfecting movement of self-surrender to the Divine and of self-transformation, both of which lead to the definitive transformation of the entire human nature—of its half-light of consciousness, of its easily tiring energy of life and of the very clay of its body. This is the consummation of the integral yoga—the bringing into play of a force-centre of divinised human life sending forth ever-widening rings of influence to encompass the whole of humanity.

We may therefore say that the unveiling of our intuitive nature is the first concern of the integral yoga. But, what is intuition? We need not make intuition more of a mystery than it actually is, nor apply the scornful term of hunch to it. Have we arrived at a rational account of instinct? Surely, no. Instinct cannot be regarded as a sort of delayed-action mechanism planted in living beings by Nature; it cannot be a chance stringing together of stray acts that just happen into a purposive whole of behaviour; it cannot be a way of action that had been once perfected by reason, by its method of trial and error and which, in course of long transmission from parent to child, got degraded into an unreasoned automatic process; nor can it be, as mediaeval Indian philosophers facetiously explained, a revived memory of that which was learnt in some former birth. The only conclusion, then, is that there is some entity, which may be called life-force or by any other name, which works purposively, yet not in the way of reason. We cannot say what exactly is the nature of the insight into purpose,—of the foresight, that is,—which this life-force has; and if this is anthropomorphism, there is no help for it. Now, this instinct which keeps coming under our eyes constantly, we may say, is something of a mystery. And intuition too, which is subtler, occurs perhaps as constantly, but it is not as well remarked because of our failure to take notice of it; we may say that it is a mystery, but in the same sense that instinct is. Any way, it is not at all a stranger to our consciousness.

Have you ever on a dark night lost your way in a countryside with bush and thicket and criss-crossed by all sorts of vague tracks? If that should ever befall to you and you happen to have just some ordinary light, we would advise you not to use it—for you can see with it only a few yards in front of you and that will

only increase your confusion; on the other hand, we would ask you to trust to your eyes to see in the darkness. The calm, steady eye gazing on the immense darkness will slowly make out this thing and that thing, by which you are helped to note your bearings and pick your way. The intuition with which the human being is endowed is, at first, something like this calm and steady gaze of the eye which is able to pick its way in the immense darkness. Has any one come across a perfectly satisfactory explanation of our belief in prayer from the point of view of strict rationality? How did man come to pray? Are we so sure that it was just cajoling and bribing, done all out of weakness, ignorance and fear? May it not be that the great mystery of God by which man is surrounded vaguely presses upon his soul and it is out of this pressure that prayer was born, but even as it was being born, fear and weakness and ignorance gathered round it, mothered it and gave it their form and physiognomy? However this may be, on every soul presses the mighty mystery of God and in every soul there is this intuition, this immediate sense, however weak and indistinct, of that great mystery. But against the turbidities of man's passion and the half-lights of his mind, which while making him see a few steps in front of him make him blind and undiscerning as regards the immensities, it can make no headway. The purpose of spiritual life is to raise this intuition to its highest power.

There is one remarkable fact which strikes us as extraordinary as we contemplate the life of Sri Ramakrishna—his complete reliance on intuition. His rationalist disciple tells him to his face that his visions are all hallucinations and Sri Ramakrishna does not argue with the disciple, does not argue with himself, but goes straight to the divine Mother for an answer and the answer is vouchsafed. Even questions that seem so naturally to fall within the scope of common-sense reasoning, he refers to the Mother, the giver to him of his intuitive knowledge, though by nature he is shrewd and full of mother-wit. He is a born mystic and his main source of knowledge is intuition. We almost wonder if such sole reliance on intuitive knowledge would be possible at all to men strongly influenced by the intellectual culture of the modern age. And the question naturally occurs to us whether the strong rationality of Sri Aurobindo's mind did not very much come in the way of the development of his intuition. He seems to have had his period of doubt and scepticism, but it definitely ended with a great experience, which he had in jail, and from that moment

onwards doubt never seems to have reared its head to call in question the authority of his intuitive experiences.

But if spiritual life is growth in intuition, should reason go and is it no good at all? Some mystics seem to adopt this extreme. But this is a dangerous attitude. Without a strong basis of austere reason man's intuitive endeavour is often apt to be unsafe. What we repeatedly meet with in history is that a great teacher brings a new spiritual impulse into men's lives and after his personal influence ceases it gets bogged in the weak reason of his following. Such a calamity should not occur if there were a clear current of reason to nourish and keep pure the spiritual impulse. Reason, however, ought never to be set in authority over intuition; on the contrary, it has to become its hand-maid. But by this we do not mean at all that reason should be deprived of what is called its freedom and forced to accept conclusions whose necessity it does not see. What is meant is that by assimilating the light of intuition, it can lift itself to a superior perception, acquire a higher plasticity, a complex subtlety of movement which belongs only to a living energy, and thus gain the ability to insinuate itself into the intricacies of the living truth of things. Sri Aurobindo stands by himself among the mystics in that, in him, high intuition goes with a strong and rigorous rationality of mind. He is severe to the arrogance of reason which gives itself the name of rationalism, but reason he never detracts. We have felt it very necessary to point this out, because unreason is from sometime trying to become a cult in the West, as one can see from much of its new art and literature, and the repercussions are duly arriving in India. This new law of Nature that ideas should rise in the West and set in the East cannot be broken until India fully recovers her soul.

We have tried to indicate what Sri Aurobindo has done to bring about this recovery. We have said that what distinguishes him is his integral vision. The Gita gave a restatement, in the language and thought of its own times, of the spiritual principles of life and conduct inherited from the past, integrating the Ancient Knowledge with all the new developments that had occurred in it and with all the new streams of influence that had flowed into it meanwhile. In our own day such a statement for us has been long needed. In this long, long period of decadence, which has now happily ended, many developments in Indian thought have taken place and not a few influences have streamed in. Especially the last few centuries through which

the world has passed have witnessed movements of great vitality both in thought and action. We needed some one who could not only recover our past—for India to remain India must remain true to the Rishis—but one who could take in all subsequent developments and all new influences of these great movements of the world, assimilate their truths and give an integrated statement of it all in the language and thought of the present day. Sri Aurobindo came and has accomplished the needed work.

The aim which he has set himself for his Yoga is something difficult for us to conceive. For he says that not only the human consciousness is to be radically changed but also the sub-conscious life and the unconscious material stuff of the body by the descent of the Super-Mind into them. Are not the laws of life and the flesh inexorable? Is it not some noble, some splendid, yet wild spiritual enthusiasm which says that they can be broken? We ourselves who write here would perhaps have found it very difficult to accept this possibility if some one other than Sri Aurobindo urged it. But why do we admit it now? All that we have said now about Sri Aurobindo, we believe, is a sufficient answer to that question. What is the substance of his teaching? It is that man is Spirit and that his life here must become a perfect expression of its nature. However cultivated and ennobled we may make our life and however complete the self-identification with Spirit in our consciousness, if we allow this weak breath of life and this absurd body to limit us, our spiritual dignity is at stake. We simply offer a more delicious dish to death. Does it mean, then, that the Supramental Yogin will live in an immortal body for ever? We do not think so. It means he will not oblige death, that is all. We think the right way to look at this question is to say, in Napoleon's words, '*On s'engage et plus on voit*',—one enters upon the task and then one sees. However difficult all this may be even to conceive and however weak our strength of aspiration, we can at least pray for Sri Aurobindo's complete victory. For he has not set this aim merely for himself, or for a few who are fit to receive the secret, but for the whole of humanity.

We believe that Sri Aurobindo is in touch with that mighty mystery and power of God which he calls the Super-Mind. What all that means how can we who are in the ignorance say or appraise? But this much we shall say. According to the Ancient Wisdom which we hold in the highest reverence, after a final definitive transformation in the evolving consciousness,

the creature and the Deity, soul and God get mixed up, in an illogical manner. The human boundaries of man disappear once for all.

Sri Aurobindo and Patanjala

BY ANILBARAN ROY

By Yoga people generally understand the eight-fold path of Rāja-Yoga as propounded by Patanjali; but that is not a Yoga at all in the proper sense of the term; it is rather Viyoga which has been called Yoga, as the Gita puts it. It is the separation of Purusha and Prakriti which ends personal life with all its troubles and sufferings, *duḥkhasaṁyogaviyogaṁ yogasaṁjñitam*. In the Rig-Veda the word Yoga is used with the meaning of effecting a union and that is the root meaning of the word; the Gita has taken up this meaning and used the term to signify the union of the human soul with the Divine. Man in his ordinary consciousness is separated from the Divine who is his own highest self, and this separation is at the root of all his imperfections and sufferings. This separation is due to the ignorance of the mind, the highest consciousness as yet reached by man as a race. By rising above this mental ignorance man recovers his unity with the Divine and through it with all other beings. That is the essential meaning of the term Yoga in the Gita as well as in the teaching of Sri Aurobindo. "The contact of the human and individual consciousness with the divine is the very essence of Yoga. Yoga is the union of that which has become separated in the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality" (Sri Aurobindo). But the term is also used to mean the processes which lead to that union and also to mean some of the spiritual states attained in the course of Yoga; for example, *saṁatvaṁ yoga ucyate*, equality is called Yoga. In Patanjala system the term Yoga has been used in this secondary sense to denote a spiritual state to be attained by a well-defined system of practice; that is a state in which the cognitive activities of the mind are stopped and the whole *citta* or mental consciousness falls into silence, *cittavrittinirodha*.

Inner silence is a pre-requisite of all Yoga; in order to rise above the ignorance we have to control the activities of the lower nature and make the heart and mind quiet and silent. So far Rāja Yoga is bound to be a part of all Yoga which aims at a higher spiritual life. And the Sankhya distinction of

Purusha and Prakriti, on which Raja Yoga bases its practical system, is a powerful aid to the attainment of this inner silence. The external world is continually acting on us through our senses ; there are instincts and impulses rooted in our nature which are operating from within ; our mind and life react and respond to them automatically and it seems to be a physical and psychological impossibility that these reactions can ever be stopped and the mind made entirely silent. [Thus Dr. S. N. Das Gupta observes: "The theory that mental states can be arrested by our efforts is an extremely original one, and up till now we know of no country other than India where such a possibility was ever conceived. In an interview that I had with the famous psychologist Dr. Sigmund Freud, he expressed great surprise, in the course of a long discussion, that such a thing should be conceived possible, but he admitted that this experiment had always been made and that, therefore, it would be hazardous to deny its possibility. In India the *Yoga* has always been practised from earliest dawn of her civilization and carries with it the testimony of many decades of centuries."] It is indeed true that the mental processes cannot be stilled as long as we live absorbed in our outer life. But within us there is a consciousness which is not affected by the external movements at all, it only sees what is happening in our outer nature. This is the Purusha of the Sankhya which supplies the metaphysical and psychological basis of the Patanjala system of Rāja Yoga. The Purusha is pure *cit*, consciousness, it has no movement, no activity, no change ; its only attribute is awareness, and even that is saying too much for awareness is not really an attribute of the Purusha, it is itself the Purusha. When by the proximity of the Purusha, Prakriti unfolds the world play, the Purusha is simply aware of it ; when there is no play it is aware of itself. This awareness is eternal, it is not at all affected by the appearance or disappearance of the world. Just as a mirror is not affected by the images reflected in it, so the Purusha within us is not affected by the thoughts, activities or feelings and emotions that are the habitual movements of Prakriti and her three *guṇas*. A concentration on this idea of the silent Purusha within us is a very effective method of controlling and silencing our outer nature and attaining ineffable peace which is not affected at all by the vicissitudes of life, and this discipline has been accepted even by other systems of Yoga which do not accept the whole stand-point of the Sankhya. The Gīta speaks of the supreme peace of Nirvana, *śāntim nirvāṇa-paramām*,

“which is reached when all the mental consciousness is perfectly controlled and liberated from desire and remains still in the Self, when, motionless like the light of a lamp in a windless place, it ceases from its restless action, shut in from its outward motion, and by the silence and stillness of the mind the Self is seen within.” This is essentially the Kaivalya of the Sankhya, the Nirvana of the Buddhists, the Liberation of the Māyāvādins; and the Indian mind with its *sattwic* temperament has a special attraction to this peace of Nirvana. Even a dynamic personality like Swami Vivekananda was irresistibly attracted towards this during his last days. Thus in a letter written to Miss Josephine MacLeod, he says: “Bonds are breaking—love dying, work becoming tasteless—the glamour is off life.....Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.”

For the Western people this silence of the Self seems to be inconceivable; even if it can be attained, it would, according to them, amount to self-annihilation. They feel the urge for life, for personality, for intense activity and they look for a philosophy which will give a spiritual basis for this. Materialism has failed; asceticism and denial of life also has no appeal for the modern mind. It is remarkable that many people are turning towards Buddhism at this critical juncture. It has, on the one hand, a noble moral discipline which the ordinary man can appreciate; on the other hand, it has the high ideal of compassion and universal service while it is apparently free from creeds and dogmas which have made Christianity unpopular. But these admirers of Buddhism fail to see that it also aims at Nirvana, the final extinction of the ego and the egoistic life. Unless the knot of the ego is loosened there can be no secure basis of a spiritual life, and the method which the Buddhists follow for achieving this is essentially the same as that of Rāja Yoga with its eight-fold path. It was the Mahayanic form of Buddhism which, apparently under the influence of the Gita, laid stress on compassion and universal service. On one side it holds up the ideal of a perfect calm and inner silence which constitute the essence of the Nirvanic experience which cuts at the root of all desire and egoism, on the other there is “universal altruism, a fathomless compassion for the world and its creatures which became, as it were, the flood and outpouring of the high Nirvanic state on life and action.” But here we do not find any basis of reconciliation, we do not see how and why activity and universal service should arise out of a state

of Nirvānic silence. Rāja Yoga also enjoins *Maitrī and Karuṇā* but only as a means of purifying the nature as a preparation for a final dissolution of all personal life. In this respect Sāṅkhya, Pātañjala and Māyāvāda were more consistent in preaching the renunciation of life and activity both as a means as well as the goal to be achieved. But, as we have already stated, this is no longer accepted as the last word of wisdom. The impersonality and silence of the self is a matter of spiritual experience and has to be accepted as a great corrective to all limited and egoistic life. But "there is a mightier fuller more positive spiritual experience in which the circle of our egoistic personality and the round of the mind's limitations vanish in the unvalled infinity of a greatest self and spirit and yet life and its works not only remain still acceptable and possible but reach up and out to their widest spiritual completeness and assume a grand ascending significance." Mahayanic thought and practice attempted to bridge the gulf between an absolute impersonality and the dynamic possibilities of our nature; as this reconciliation has a deep foundation in truth, the Mahayanic ideal found ready response in the hearts of people, but on account of its negative conception of the ultimate Reality it could not formulate a satisfactory philosophical basis for its preaching and practice. Taoism was more satisfactory in this respect. In it the Tao is conceived to be "an impersonal ineffable Eternal who is spirit and at the same time the one life of the universe; it supports and flows impartially in all things." By identifying ourselves with the impersonality of the one supreme Reality, Tao, we arise out of the egoistic consciousness; but once this is achieved, "we live in that a real life and have another great consciousness which penetrates all things, ourselves penetrable to all eternal influences." It is the latter aspect of Tao which we do not find in the Purusha of the Sāṅkhya or the Brahman of the Māyāvādins; but it is there with a profounder significance in the Purushottama of the Gita. "The Gita demands of us like the Taoist thinker to renounce our natural personality and its works into the Self, the Spirit, the Eternal, the Brahman, *ātmani sannyasya, brahmani*. And there is this coincidence because that is always man's highest and freest possible experience of quietistic inner largeness and silence reconciled with an outer dynamic active living, the two co-existent or fused together in the impersonal infinite reality and illimitable action of the one immortal Power and sole eternal Existence. But the Gita adds a phrase of immense import that

alters everything, *ātmani atho mayi*. The demand is to see all things in the self and then in 'Me the Ishwara', to renounce all action into the Self, Spirit, Brahman and thence into the supreme Person, the Purushottama. There is here a still greater and profounder complex of spiritual experience, larger transmutation of the significance of human life, a more mystic and heart-felt sweep of the return of the stream, the restoration of personal works and the cosmic action to the Eternal Worker."¹

The conception of the ultimate Reality as a purely Impersonal Power has this defect that it does not give full value to our individual personality. By concentration on the Tao or the nirguṇa Brahman, we lose our ego and become impersonal ; if after that we live and act by some spiritual dynamism rising out of that Impersonality, we can only be temporary centres of a cosmic action, our individuality is lost with our ego and there can be no question of a relation between the individual soul and the Divine with all that such a relation implies. Western followers of Buddhism and Patanjala, like Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley, hold the view that it is the shell of the ego which is cramping the human consciousness and this is at the root of all human imperfections and sufferings; once this shell is broken by Yogic practice and man enters into the universal consciousness, a higher race of men will be created. Though their thesis that humanity is now ready to take this higher step in evolution has roused widespread interest, it is significant that Western thinkers cannot conceive how can there be wordly life and activity when one loses one's individuality. It is this defect of the Impersonalistic theories that is corrected by the more integral knowledge of the Gita. The Gita does not hold that by transcending the ego we lose our individuality, rather by that process we find our true spiritual individuality which is an eternal portion of Purushottama. In his impersonality he is the one Self of all beings; but as the supreme Person he has intimate relations with a multiplicity of individual souls who are all so many individual forms of his own personality. Individual personality would have been a temporary or illusory creation if there had not been this truth of personality in the supreme Reality. The shell of the ego is there to help us to form out of this lower nature of body, life and mind a mould for the manifestation of our divine individuality ; when this mould is ready we have to burst the ego so that we may be both individual

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, 2nd series, First Edition pp. 429-30.

and universal at the same time, thus manifesting our true divinity. "It is true that the ego and its limited personality are even such a temporary and mutable formation of Nature and therefore it must be broken and we must feel ourselves one with all and infinite. But the ego is not the real person; when it has been dissolved there still remains the spiritual individual, there is still the eternal Jiva. The ego limitation disappears and the soul lives in a profound unity with the One and feels its universal unity with all things. And yet it is still our own soul that enjoys this expanse and oneness. The universal action, even when it is felt as the action of one and the same energy in all, even when it is experienced as the initiation and movement of the Ishwara, still takes different form in different souls of men, *añśa sanātana*, and a different turn in their nature. The light of spiritual knowledge, the manifold universal Shakti, the eternal delight of being stream into us and around us, concentrate in the soul and flow out on the surrounding world from each as from a centre of living spiritual consciousness whose circumference is lost in the infinite."²

But constituted as we are at present with a poor, frail, imperfect body, life and mind we find it difficult to conceive that we are really an eternal portion of the Divine with infinite spiritual possibilities in us, and we must admit that the Gita did not make this point very clear; it has said indeed that the Jiva is not an illusion or a creation of the lower Prakriti of the three *guṇas* but a becoming of the Parā Prakriti, the supreme Nature of the Divine (7/5). But it has not given any detailed description of this Parā Prakriti and her actions, while it has elaborated on the other Prakriti of the three *guṇas*. Indeed, it refers expressly to the Parā Prakriti only once, and commentators like Shankara have refused to recognise the existence of any such higher spiritual nature of the Divine, the whole world-creation, according to them, being only a work of the lower Prakriti or Māyā. It is Sri Aurobindo who has for the first time brought out the full implications of the Gita's distinction between the two Natures, Parā and Aparā. But the gulf between the two Natures seems to be too wide, and the Gita nowhere explicitly says that the lower can be transformed into the higher. The Gita's solution seems to be that the Jiva should rise out of his bondage in the lower nature into his true being in Parā Prakriti and live and act from there in intimate union with the Divine.

² *Essays on the Gita*, 2nd series, pp. 430-31.

We find that schools of the Patanjala system also have taken a similar view in their ideal of the *Jivanmukta*. The *citta* or the mental consciousness falls into absolute quiescence in the liberated man; but if he chooses to live and act after that he can exercising his free will create a higher sort of *citta*, called the *nirmana-citta* for that purpose. That action will not be for earthly enjoyment but for helping other men to attain the liberated status he himself has attained, *loka-saṅgrahārthāya*, as the Gita says. There are many points of difference between the *nirmāṇa-citta* of Patanjala and the Parā Prakriti of the Gita, and the liberated man of Patanjala has not that union with the Divine which the Gita makes the whole object of its Yoga; but in both cases the gulf between the lower and the higher consciousness is not bridged and thus the opposition between the divine and the undivine will continue even in the life of the liberated man as long as he chooses to live and work in this material body. It is this deficiency in these ancient systems of Yoga that has been made up in the integral philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

Nature and life in Nature are now apparently so undivine, so full of imperfection, distortion and suffering, that it seems impossible to reconcile it with a Divine Being. The Gita expressly says, "Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and turn to me (the Divine)." (9/33). There seem to be only two possible explanations of this undivine world; either it is constituted by some principle which is essentially different from the Divine; or the whole thing is an illusion. The former is the view accepted by Sankhya and Patanjala according to whom Purusha is *cit* and Prakriti is *acit*; the latter is the view of the Māyāvādins according to whom there is no real world at all, but a hallucination somehow created in the unfathomable silence of the Eternal. It is Sri Aurobindo who has shown that what appears as the undivine is only a mask of the Divine and a means for a new divine creation; he has brought out the full significance of the vision of the Vedic seers thus expressed in the Rig-Veda, "That which is immortal in mortals and possessed of the truth, is a god and established inwardly as an energy working out in our divine powers.... Become high-uplifted, O strength, pierce all veils, manifest in us the things of the Godhead." Our mind, life and body which are the seats of imperfection and suffering do not constitute our whole being, they are only our outermost or frontal part which has not yet reached its fullest development.

If we withdraw from our absorption in the outer life and go inward, we find within ourselves a greater self with far greater powers of knowledge, action and enjoyment and that self is a positive proof that we are not bound to our mortal life but are the true sons of Immortality. As a matter of fact, the opposition between the divine and the undivine, which is such a glaring fact of life, is only an appearance and on the surface. Sri Aurobindo has revealed in detail the gradations by which the Divine descends into the apparent undivine and how the undivine ascends into the divine. Our inner subliminal self is the link showing the transition from the one to the other.

It is recognised by all systems of Indian Philosophy that our present life with mind as our highest consciousness is a life in the Ignorance or Avidya, and that it is the goal of man to rise out of it to Knowledge or Vidya. Sri Aurobindo has fully analysed this Ignorance in *The Life Divine* and clearly indicated all its seven folds. Of these our first and capital ignorance is our limitation to the surface existence and the unconsciousness of our highest as of our inmost self. "There are three elements in the totality of our being; there is the submental and the subconscious . . . comprising the material basis and a good part of our life and body; there is the subliminal, which comprises the inner being, taken in its entirety of inner mind, inner life, inner physical with the soul or psychic entity supporting them; there is this waking consciousness which the subliminal and the subconscious throw up on the surface, a wave of their secret surge. But even this is not an adequate account of what we are; for there is not only something deep within behind our normal self-awareness, but something also high above it; that too is ourselves, other than our surface mental personality, but not outside our true self; that too is a country of our spirit. For the subliminal proper is no more than the inner being on the level of the Knowledge-Ignorance luminous, powerful and extended beyond the poor conception of our waking mind, but still not the supreme or the whole sense of our being, not its ultimate mystery. We become aware, in a certain experience, of a range of being superconscious to all these three, aware too of something, a supreme highest Reality sustaining and exceeding them all, which humanity speaks of vaguely as Spirit, God, the Oversoul; from these superconscious ranges we have visitations and in our highest being we tend towards them and to that supreme Spirit. There is then in our total range of existence a superconscience as well as a subconscious and in-

conscience, over-arching and perhaps enveloping our subliminal and our waking selves, but unknown to us, seemingly unattainable and incommunicable. But with the extension of our knowledge, we discover what this spirit or oversoul is; it is ultimately our own highest deepest vastest Self, it is apparent on its summits or by reflection in ourselves as Sachchidananda creating us and the world by the power of His divine Knowledge-Will, spiritual, supramental, truth-conscious, infinite."³

It is obvious that Rāja Yoga with its methods of withdrawal from the outer life and its constant inward concentration would reveal our inner existence behind our surface personality. Indeed the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali devote a whole section, the Vibhūti-Pada, to a consideration of our inner consciousness and faculties. The subconscious and the subliminal parts of our being were well-known to the author. Thus we are told that the mind of the Yogin can penetrate into the body of another person (3/28), can directly know the minds of others (3/19), can remember his past lives (3/18) can know the past and the future (3/16), can see subtle entities, angels and gods, and so forth. All this can be done by the subliminal self as we find it described by Sri Aurobindo. In our surface mentality we are sometimes aware of a consciousness that can feel or know the thoughts and inner reactions of others or become aware of objects or happenings without any observable sense-intervention or otherwise exercise powers super-normal to our ordinary capacity; but these capacities are occasional, rudimentary, vague. Their possession is proper to our concealed subliminal self and, when they emerge, it is by a coming to the surface of its powers or operations. These emergent operations of the subliminal being or some of them are now fragmentarily studied under the name of psychic phenomena,—although they have ordinarily nothing to do with the *psyche*, the soul, the inmost entity in us, but only with the inner mind, the inner vital, the subtle-physical parts of our subliminal being."⁴

But while it is a part of Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga to acquire a knowledge of our inner self and develop all our faculties and powers as a means of divinising the whole of our life and action, Patanjali warns the sadhaka against these Vibhūtis which are to be avoided as so many temptations and snares. For, according to him, all this is within the domain of

³ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 405-6.

⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. II, pp. 368-69; also see pp. 199, 200.

Avidya, and without going beyond it no one can enter into the pure consciousness of the Purusha, which is the true goal. Sri Aurobindo also says that the subliminal, though a greater self, is still on the level of the Knowledge-Ignorance; for "though an increased self-knowldge is normal here, it is not at once an integral knowledge: an awareness by direct contact, which is the principal power of the subliminal, is not sufficient for that; for it may be contact with greater becomings and powers of Knowledge but also with greater becomings and powers of the Ignorance."⁵ But the remedy is not to leave this altogether as Patanjali would have us do but to open it to still higher powers of Knowledge, awareness by identity which also is a part of our total being. It is of this superconscient self and the supramental power of which Patanjali seems to have had no glimpse or clear indication. The highest power of Prakriti according to him is Buddhi, and beyond that there is the Purusha, *yaḥ buddheḥ paratastu saḥ*, as the Gita says. Now the Purusha is no doubt above the mind and the Buddhi, but the latter do not belong to a Prakriti separate from the Purusha, they are all derived from him, diminished powers of the Purusha himself, and the silence of the Purusha, though an aspect of him does not give a whole account of the Purusha. It is the supramental power of the Purusha which has created this world, and opening ourselves to that power we can make our body, life and mind a vehicle for the manifestation of the Sachchidananda Purusha in terrestrial existence. Laying exclusive stress on the silent witness aspect of the Purusha, Sankhya and Patanjala missed the dynamic and creative aspect and thus they had to explain the world-play by positing an alien principle, Prakriti which is *acit* as distinguished from the *cit-śhakti*, Purusha. But the very fact that Prakriti can reflect itself in Purusha or reflect Purusha in itself shows that they cannot be two radically different powers. Prakriti is *acit*, not because it is different from Purusha but because the consciousness of the Purusha has concealed itself in her for the purpose of the world play; that concealed consciousness is emerging by a slow process under the guidance of the Purusha himself. The Psychic being or the soul is the representative of the Purusha for this purpose in every individual being, and it is a true ray of the Divine. Patanjala recognises no such soul in man; what is called soul is according to it only a distorted reflection of the Purusha in Prakriti. But the remedy

⁵ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 366.

is not to destroy or abolish the reflector, but to remedy its defects so that it may truly reflect the Purusha and thus create a true figure of him under terrestrial conditions; that is Sri Aurobindo's ideal of the Life Divine as expressed in the terminology of Sankhya and Patanjali.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is not an original treatise on Rāja Yoga, it only puts in a systematic form the records of the spiritual experiences of many sadhakas who had practised that Yoga in some form or other, and as such it is an authentic book on Yogic experience, and it contains a wealth of material which cannot be adequately dealt with here. Also, we cannot be sure that we properly interpret or evaluate all that is laid down there; indeed, a school of Patanjala Yoga has grown up for centuries containing interpretations and developments which do not always agree with each other. But the authenticity of the fundamental experience, the silent consciousness of the Purusha is vouched for by all. "Consciousness", says Sri Aurobindo. "is not, to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative action, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of Yoga, e.g., a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place."

Meditation and concentration constitute the core of Rāja Yoga, the other processes being only preparatory, and these constitute an essential part of all Yoga; indeed we find it specially referred to in the Upanishads. Thus the Chhandogya Upanishad says, *Dhyāna* is greater than *citta* and *Vijnāna* is greater than *Dhyāna*; the meaning is that when the *citta* or mind is concentrated and silenced one attains the spiritual consciousness and knowledge.⁶ In Integral Yoga, concentration is all-important, but while in Rāja-Yoga the ultimate concentration is on the silent state of the Purusha, here the concentration is on all aspects of the integral Divine. "A separate concentration", says Sri Aurobindo, "of the thought or of emotions or of the will on

⁶ As illustrations, the Upanishad says, the Earth meditates, the Mountain meditates, the Sky meditates.

a single idea, object, state, inner movement or principle is no doubt a frequent need here also ; but this is only a subsidiary process. A wide opening, harmonious concentration of the whole being in all its parts upon the One who is also the All—this is its essential character and must determine all its practice..... The concentration, then, of an enlightened thought, will and heart in unison on one great object of knowledge, object of action, object of emotion is the starting point of our Yoga. That object must be the source of the Light that which is growing in us, the Divine itself to which knowingly or unknowingly we aspire."

The silence of mind aimed at by Rāja Yoga is a complete silence leading to the cessation of all thoughts and all activities of Nature, and as such it is extremely difficult to attain by individual effort. That is why Rāja Yoga takes the help of Hathayogic *āsana* and *prāṇāyama* and enjoins a rigorous moral discipline. Indeed, its requirements of Non-violence and other rules are such that no worldly man can ever hope to comply with them. Rāja Yoga can be practised only by sannyāsis who have renounced the world and can pass most of their time in meditation. Silent mind is also a first necessity in Integral Yoga, but the aim here is not, as in Rāja Yoga, the dissolution of Nature but the preparation of the lower Nature so that the higher Power can work in it and effect its transformation. If entire silence of the mind can be attained, it will no doubt be a powerful aid, but that is not indispensable. "The important thing is to get rid of the habit of the invasion of troubling thoughts, wrong feelings, confusion of ideas, unhappy movements. These disturb the nature and cloud it and make it difficult for the Force to work ; when the mind is quiet and at peace, the Force can work more easily." This brings us to another important distinction. While in Rāja Yoga, the sadhaka has to rely on his own effort, in integral Yoga the effort of the sadhaka is only one of the factors ; indeed in it the sadhana is done by the divine Shakti, the sadhaka's task is to open himself to that Shakti by self-surrender and reject all the movements of the lower nature that stand in the way of the effective working of the Divine. In Rāja Yoga God has a very subordinate place, so to say ; in our Yoga, he is the master of the Yoga, *Yogesvara*.

⁷ Worldly work is not incompatible with this method, rather it becomes a powerful aid when done in the true spirit of Gita's Karmayoga. Later commentators of the Patanjala school have introduced elements of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga evidently under the influence of the Gita.

In Rāja Yoga God serves only as a helpful object of meditation ; contemplation of his perfect nature helps the sadhaka to grow into that nature. God again is not the creator of the world, he is only a special Purusha among many Purushas, and we have seen the nature of a Purusha is that he is *dṛśimātra*, only an observer, who does nothing. Meditating on him, we also grow into that state of pure awareness. Thus Rāja Yoga is essentially a form of Jñāna Yoga, leading to the dissolution of all life in the ineffable silence of the Purusha consciousness. Integral Yoga is all Yogas in one and the idea of the Divinity in it is also integral. The sadhaka of the integral Yoga begins with the conception of "an infinite, free and perfect unity in which all beings move and live and all can meet and become one,—a unity at once Personal and Impersonal, personal as the conscious Divine manifesting itself in the universe, impersonal as an infinite existence which is the fount and base and constituent of all beings and all energies. On this unity the thought can concentrate in order that it may not only hold intellectually that it exists, but see it dwelling in all and realise it in ourselves,—one existence that constitutes itself in all things and exceeds them, one consciousness that supports all action and experience and guides the evolution of things towards their unrealised aim. On That the heart can concentrate and possess it as universal Love and Delight of being,—a Delight of being that supports the soul in all its experiences, maintains even the errant ego in its ordeals and struggles and finally delivers it from sorrow and suffering, and a conscious Love that draws all things by their own path to unity. On That the Will can concentrate as the Power that guides and fulfils and is the source of all strength,—in the impersonality a self-illumined Force that contains all results in itself, in the personality an all-wise and omnipresent Master of the Yoga whom nothing can prevent from leading it to its goal."

One capital distinction between Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and all other ancient systems is that while the latter aim at the liberation of the individual, the former has for its goal the liberation of man as a race. That cannot be accomplished by the sadhana or tapasya of any individual or group of individuals, but by the divine Power acting from above and helping terrestrial Nature to take the next higher step in her evolution, raising man to superman just as she raised the plant to the animal, and the animal to man in the earlier stages of her evolutionary process. It is remarkable that Western Yogins like Gerald Heard

have grasped this import of the world crisis, and no doubt the humanist movement in the West and the theory of Evolution have prepared the Western mind for this great Yoga of the World Mother. But as regards the technique of helping this evolutionary process of Nature, the above-mentioned Western Yogins seem to be making a mess of Rāja Yoga and Buddhist Yoga with a leaven of psycho-analysis. They fail to see that these Yogas have been practised in India for many centuries and though they have greatly helped the human consciousness in preparing for the higher evolution, in themselves they are not sufficient for bringing about the consummation. The new realisation requires a new vision and an integral method and that is exactly what we find in the great new synthesis of Sri Aurobindo. Let us conclude by giving a brief account of the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo as summarised from *The Synthesis of Yoga* which appeared first in the *Arya* in 1914.

The method we have to pursue is to put our whole conscious being into relation and contact with the Divine and to call Him in to transform our entire being into His, so that in a sense God Himself, the real Person in us becomes the sadhak of the sadhana as well as the Master of the Yoga by whom the lower personality is used as the centre of divine transformation and the instrument of its own perfection. In effect, the pressure of the Tapas, the force of consciousness in us dwelling on the Idea of the divine Nature, upon that which we are in our entirety, produces its own realisation. The divine and all-knowing and all-effecting descends upon the limited and obscure, progressively illumines and energises the whole lower nature and substitutes its own action for all the terms of the inferior human light and mortal activity. This method implies three stages of which only the last can be wholly blissful or rapid,—the attempt of the ego to enter into contact with the Divine, the wide, full and therefore laborious preparation of the whole lower Nature by the divine working to receive and become the higher Nature, and the eventual transformation. In fact, however, the divine strength, often unobserved and behind the veil, substitutes itself for our weakness and supports us through all our failings of faith, courage and patience. There are three outstanding features of the action of the higher when it works integrally on the lower nature. In the first place it does not act according to a fixed system and succession as in the specialised methods of Yoga (*e.g.*, Rāja Yoga), but with a sort of free, scattered and yet gradually intensive and powerful working determined by the temperament

of the individual in whom it operates, the helpful materials which it offers and the obstacles which it presents to purification and perfection. Secondly, the process being integral, accepts our nature such as it stands organised by our past evolution and without rejecting anything essential compels all to undergo a divine change. Everything in us is seized by the hands of a mighty artificer and transformed into a clear image of that which it now seeks confusedly to present. Thirdly, the divine Power in us uses all life as a means of the integral Yoga. Every experience and outer contact with our world-environment, however trifling or however disastrous, is used for the work, and every inner experience, even to the most repellant suffering or the most humiliating fall, becomes a step in the path of perfection.

An integral method and an integral result. The divinising of the normal material life of man and of his great secular attempt of mental and moral self-culture in the individual and the race by the integration of a widely perfect spiritual existence would thus be the crown alike of our individual and our common effort. Such a consummation being no other than the kingdom of heaven within reproduced in the kingdom of heaven without, would be also the true fulfilment of the great dream cherished in different times by the world's religions.

A Psychological Appreciation of Sri Aurobindo's System of Integral Yoga

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'Yoga' is an ancient word of Indian Culture implying 'union' (with Supreme Consciousness), but, practically, it has meant a system of discipline leading to such union or the increasing fulfilment and perfection of human life. However, the extensive yogic literature reveals not one yoga but many yogas with a history of gradual development. Bhakti yoga, Jñāna yoga, Karma yoga, Rāja yoga, Hatha yoga and Tāntric method of yoga are the most important ones of them. Now each of them makes one particular aspect of human nature basic to itself, upon which a whole method of discipline is built for effecting change in personality. The first three of the yogas above named, for example, make respectively feeling, knowing and willing aspects of mind basic to their systems. In these various yogas a most interesting psychological truth is at work. Personality, the psychologists say, is unique. That is to say, each individual, though possessing traits of character similar to others, still in the force and degree of the traits is different, and then in the mode of their combination presents a pattern of psycho-physical life altogether his own. Bhakti yoga, Jñāna yoga and Karma yoga recognise three broad types of men with emotion, knowledge and action as the predominant trends. In a task of transformation of personality from its present status of felt imperfections and disharmonies to a possible status of relative perfection and harmony, each individual, it further follows, must take his stand upon and employ his deepest and most dynamic trend of life. That alone will serve as the most effective lever for accomplishing the change wished for. Hatha yoga primarily aims at a discipline of the body and nerves which must lead on ultimately to *Samādhī*. Rāja yoga involves a mental discipline and aims at a state of *Samādhī*, through the method of largely moral and personal effort. The latter does

not confine itself to any particular aspect of human nature, but in its aim it remains content with the attainment of the *Samādhī* state and does not seek a transformation of the whole nature. The ordinary waking life is left behind and rejected, as it were; Rāja Yoga, in fact, does not conceive that *Samādhī* once reached can be employed to raise the status of the ordinary consciousness, so that one could live all the time at the level of and according to that higher consciousness; thus a sort of double working of consciousness tends to persist in the individual.

But Sri Aurobindo, while fully recognising the force and special contribution of the above systems, has felt the need of propounding a new system of yoga, called by him Integral Yoga. This Integral Yoga effects a synthesis amongst the previous systems and marks a striking advance upon them. It was expounded in a comprehensive manner in the pages of the "Arya" under the title "Synthesis of Yoga", which when published in book form will be a great boon to the students and seekers of the profoundest truths of human nature. This system of yoga is integral in the sense that it takes the whole of the psycho-physical being of man as an integer and aims at, as an ideal, a complete transformation of the whole being. It clearly recognises the psychological unity of the individual and considers it a weakness of the method to take only one element of human nature while remaining indifferent to the others, which, however, being parts of the total nature do react upon the aspect selected one way or the other. It is obviously more economical in effort and fruitful in result to take the whole nature together, though in an individual at a time a particular aspect may act more directly. Further, Integral Yoga aims at a complete transformation of life as such. It does not seek to realise the blissful state of *Samādhī* alone. "Our object is" says Sri Aurobindo "to make the spiritual life and its experiences fully active and fully utilisable in the waking state and even in the normal use of functions". (Arya", Vol. I, p. 246). There is no world-denial here. In fact, it is world-affirmation and world-acceptance in a most hearty and real manner.

Yoga, it may incidentally be noticed, is to Sri Aurobindo a normal function of the cosmic evolutionary process. "All life is yoga". According to him, "In the right view both of life and of yoga all life is either consciously or sub-consciously a yoga. For we mean by this term a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being.". In man this process becomes self-conscious "by

which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained" (*Ibid.*, p. 37). "A given system of yoga then", he elaborates, "can be no more than a selection or a compression, into narrower but more energetic forms of intensity, of the general methods which are already being used loosely, largely, in a leisurely movement, with a profuser apparent waste of material and energy but with a more complete combination" (*Ibid.*, p. 37) by nature. Obviously, in consonance with the object of making spiritual life and its gains utilisable in the waking state, integral yoga will involve ultimately a transformation of the entire social and material life; and any seclusion from society, which individual aspirants may demand, can only be a temporary affair. The relation of the individual to society from the yogic point of view has been so very aptly put in the words,

"the right relation of the *individual* with the collectivity is neither to pursue egoistically his own material or mental progress or spiritual salvation without regard to his fellows, nor for the sake of the community to suppress or maim his proper development but to sum up in himself all its best and completest possibilities and pour them out by thought, action and all other means on his surroundings so that the whole race may approach nearer to the attainment of its supreme personalities". (Arya, p. 174).

The sub-conscious yoga of nature and of man, leading them in the fullness of time to an expression of their potentialities, really interests us as it may indicate the character of the yoga, as a self-conscious process, by which man may be able to carry forward his development more swiftly and puissantly. Therefore yoga directly implies such self-conscious activity.

We would now like to grapple with the complexities of this subtle process. It goes without saying that all experimentation for the perfecting of the instrument of yoga is of the highest cultural value, as it aims at the improvement of human nature itself and not merely a control and readjustment of external conditions. Sri Aurobindo's work on yoga is bound to strike anybody at its minimum as the most daring experimental attempt ever conceived. All the ills of physical pain, mental incapacity, error, ill-will, social, economic and political mal-adjustments are ultimately traced back by the author to the nature of the present mode of human consciousness.

Now what exactly is this consciousness and how is it responsible for all the defects and sufferings of our life? The central fact of this consciousness is, as W. James affirms, that it is 'personal'. 'Personal' in the sense that each stream of consciousness is owned by somebody but further that it is felt as being exclusively his and contrasted with those of others. The concept of self, according to psychological characterisation, develops *pari passu* with not-self. This consciousness, which develops out of an essential contrast with not-self is termed by yoga and some philosophies as egoistic consciousness. "Exclusiveness, selection and discrimination are the root and essence". C. G. Jung sums up, "of all that can claim the name of consciousness".* In its composition, at the last analysis, it consists of impulses and instincts which are conations or activities operating by their individual impulsions. Modern psycho-analytical research and other motivationist psychologies show how even the higher activities of intellection and volition have evolved out of these instinctive urges. The individualistic nature of instincts further bears out the egoistic nature of our consciousness. The altruistic impulses of sympathy and fellow-feeling too, as impulses, operate blindly and individualistically, *i.e.*, at the moment that they arise they seek their own gratification in the same way to the exclusion of rival considerations as anger or fear or hatred. The amount of harmony that we achieve whether in the individual or the society is through the device of providing inhibitions, checks, counter-checks and compromises, involving exchange and adjustment of gratifications. Thus the peace in the individual amongst egoistically operating impulses, as also in the society amongst egoistically struggling individuals, or social groups acting similarly, is a patched-up affair, a superimposition. The basis of our consciousness is *ahankāra*; or, as MacDougall puts it, the whole web of our mental life is woven round the self-regarding sentiment.

Obviously such consciousness, involving as it does an essential contrast with other personal consciousnesses, cannot develop the sense of unity and identity of interest with them, which is indispensable for a *radical solution* of our social conflicts. In the individual too so long as the basis of action remains impulse or desire, which is impulse at the ideational level of mental life, the sense of inner harmony can only be that of mutual adjust-

* C. G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality, p. 26.

ment, a balancing of forces, which by themselves would seek to act exclusively and sovereignly.

The solutions of such harmonies are merest palliatives in the eye of Sri Aurobindo, whose vision takes him into the future of the deepest human possibilities and who, as a result of long experimental effort first on himself and then on others, has come to the definite conclusion that a higher mode of consciousness, freed from the limitation of egoistic consciousness, is an attainable possibility. And that the attainment of such consciousness would bring, in howsoever distant a time, the real and complete solution of the problems raised by present human nature. Surely we are engrossed too much in the present, in fact the present moment—that is further a characteristic of the egoistic consciousness—and therefore we have little thought for the future, much less for so distant a future as visualised by yoga. But still it is necessary for man to look before and after and reflect on the profundities of life and existence and, therefore, even for the sake of fixing the ideal towards which we might just slowly move, we cannot help considering the possibilities of life and yoga. "The process of yoga" we might now affirm in the fuller and the more direct language of yoga "is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the transcendent and universal consciousness can pour itself into individual mould and transform it".¹

This is a statement too directly metaphysical to be acceptable to the purely psychological mind. It involves an assumption about *the soul* and a *transcendental and universal consciousness* and then a reference to *the yogic process of influence* by which the transcendent transforms the individual consciousness. Each one of these three ideas is essential to the integral yoga and they cause tremendous difficulty to modern psychology. Let us consider them a little one by one.

Psychology since Lange has avowedly sought to be a "Psychology without the soul". W. James ruled out the concept of pure ego from the field of Psychology retaining only the empirical ego and for him "thoughts themselves could be the thinkers". Later Ward, Stout, and MacDougall in their treatment of self, while still rejecting the concept of a metaphysical soul, felt constrained to posit a subject of experience, the knower, feeler and willer of our knowings, feelings and willings.

¹ "Arya" Vol. I, p. 369.

Regarding the nature of the subject a few sentences from Ward will make a most interesting reading. A subject, to him, is necessarily implied in all mental processes. "It is not enough", says he, "to talk of feelings and volitions, what we mean is that some individual—man or worm—feels, strives, acts thus and thus".² Further, more forcefully, "But however much assailed and disowned, the concept of a 'Self' or conscious subject is to be found implicitly and explicitly in all psychological writers whatever—not more in Berkeley, who accepts it as a fact, than in Hume, who treats it as a fiction. This being so, we are far more likely to reach the truth eventually if we openly acknowledge this inextinguishable assumption, if such it prove instead of resorting to all sorts of devious periphrases to hide it".³ Regarding the theory of treating the series of feelings as themselves constituting the self, he trenchantly observes that the function of "being a known" is qualitatively different from that of 'a knower'. Therefore the subject of experience must be necessarily different from the succession of mental states which it knows. But "this psychological concept of a self or subject is", he insists, "after all by no means identical with the metaphysical concept of a soul".⁴

A reader may easily ask why this caution against identification and how is it really different from the soul? Is it that Psychology as a natural science by the premises of its character must avoid all references to a metaphysical reality or to avoid the controversies regarding the existence of the soul or for any other unknown reason? Otherwise the psychological 'subject' is hardly distinguishable from the soul.

The fact is that psychology as a science is concerned with an empirical investigation of the mental operations and the question of any ultimate basis of them in a soul must be relegated to metaphysics. Psychology as such would neither affirm nor deny the reality of the soul. But through an empirical account of self it does almost always directly and indirectly affirm as though that account gave the whole matter of human individuality.

Recent times have witnessed in psychology the growth of a number of distinct schools with sharply contrasted stand-points. Their views regarding the nature of human personality are very different.

To Behaviourism, which denies consciousness as such,

² J. Ward, *Psychological Principles*, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Personality is an organised totality of bodily conditionings. This is one extreme. At the other extreme stands the school of Cultural Science Psychology represented by Dilthey and Spranger which insists that psychology is a 'science of the individual subject'. The subject or self Spranger characterises as *Sinnerzeugende* (meaning-creating) and *Sinnerlebende* (meaning-experiencing) and as definitely *Strukturiert*, that is, possessing a definite form, which constitutes its individuality. And all experience is marked by the characteristic of *ich-bezogenheit* (self-reference). But this subject is again guarded against the metaphysical suggestions of the term. Most of the recent studies on personality are of an experimental nature involving little attempt at an explanation of the phenomena. Dilthey, Spranger, Ward, Stout and MacDougall are the psychologists keen on seeking an explanation and it is obvious from their account, as illustrated in particular by Ward mentioned more fully above, that while resisting a metaphysical excursion they feel impelled to postulate a subject of experience, which is itself above experience. Ward in another context asks "of what nature the agency (the agent implied in personality) is to which we owe our sense-data is a problem, but to suppose that we ourselves are only phenomenal and resolvable into sense-data is after all impossible; for how then do we come to talk of the phenomenal as distinct from the real?"⁵

In his analysis of the empirical self, Ward distinguishes three selves as comprised in the empirical self, and which he calls (i) the sensitive and appetitive self (ii) the imagining and desiring self and (iii) the thinking and willing self. And "central to all of them is the pure self, the subject, which is the thinker of all our inmost thoughts, the doer of all our deeds—no longer a presentation of self, but the self that has these and all other presentations."⁶

We have devoted a long space to showing how on psychological grounds a subject of experience is largely made out to be a necessity. The reason is that for yoga the existence of a self 'central' and 'inmost' to all our appetitions, desires, thoughts and volitions is the first postulate. Yoga as a science and art of life takes its birth in the perception that in our ordinary behaviour we identify ourselves now with the body, now with a desire and now with a belief or conviction, while our true self is still interior to them governing them all as their subject. This inmost fact of selfhood is exactly the aim of yoga to realise by bringing it into

⁵ J. Ward, *Psychological Principles*, p. 382.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

a vivid play in consciousness by correcting the habit of false identifications with partial expressions of it.

Yoga, using a modern mode of expression one might say, involves a radical revaluation of values. We in our ordinary experience attach varying degrees of value to the various component factors or selves of our personality—comparable to the *Koshas* or Sheaths of the Upanishads. The body with its sensations and appetitions, the mind in its lower functions of desiring and imagining and then mind in its higher functions of intellection and volition and then last of all the subject, the most central term of personality, all receive different valuations and are arranged as though in a hierarchy. This is a plain psychological fact. But yoga as a practical art sets about revaluating their values, so that instead of the body and its sensations passing for the highest in our ordinary scale of values is sought to be put at its proper place, while the abiding term of our personality the subject and soul is given the first place to straighten and reorganise the entire scale. Education does the same thing. It instils into the minds of the students a new scale of values. Yoga can easily be affirmed as an intensive educational discipline attempting a reconstruction of experience on the strict basis of truth and reality of our being.

Psychology at the moment is indeed seeking to adhere rather rigidly to its phenomenal terms, but that is really dictated by its present stage of knowledge. Psychology needs for some time more to just collect facts rather than attempt explanation of mental phenomena. But obviously if modern physics has, in spite of itself, been led into metaphysics, with much greater necessity will it happen to psychology, which deals with man's inner mental life, when the general fact-collecting is over and the time for seeking explanation comes.

The second of the three assumptions above referred to involves the question of the existence of a universal consciousness or God. Nineteenth century witnessed a serious conflict between science and religion. But since the dawn of the present century the relation has tended to become unexpectedly harmonious. Modern physics has obvious idealistic implications. Matter, say some exponents of it, is a derivative reality. Primary and ultimate reality is force or consciousness. Einstein, the leader of them all, goes beyond others when he affirms that ultimate reality cannot be known by scientific methods and that the method called religious intuition might really succeed. It is interesting to read from the pen of Einstein, Eddington, J. Jeans and others their

accounts of the nature of matter and the mysterious universe around us. It is so revealing how the commonsense and even the former scientific notion of matter is replaced by a metaphysical idea of a force and energy, which is by some clearly affirmed as positing consciousness. A universal consciousness, as the basis of the phenomenal universe which we see around us, is thus very largely made out.

The same conclusion is reinforced by the development of purposivistic tendencies in recent biology.

In some other sciences and philosophy, of course, contrary tendencies do also exist. But on the whole it is possible to affirm that today there is a very large agreement of opinion on consciousness being the nature of ultimate reality. This consciousness is for religion God and for integral yoga the transcendent Reality, the Divine and the Perfection incorporate.

We now turn to the third assumption implied in the words of our quotation "the egoistic consciousness . . . in which the transcendent and universal consciousness can pour itself into individual mould and transform it". This involves the relation of the individual and the universal consciousness, of man and God. Sri Aurobindo affirms, "By this yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold Himself in human life". It is rather characteristic of integral yoga that the sadhaka in opening himself up to the Divine, a process of sadhana later described, calls upon Him to transform him. So that transformation is actually effected by the Supreme Consciousness, the condition precedent being just proper preparation in the seeker in terms of surrender, purity and sincerity. At another place a sentence runs; "He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite. He has received the Divine touch without which there is no awakening, no opening of the soul. . . ." (*Arya*, Vol. I, p. 364).

Our metaphysical excursion itself in an article avowedly psychological has been a little too long. But yoga even aims at a direct knowledge of reality and, therefore, a reference to the question of ultimate being is unavoidable. A metaphysics is necessary to it though this metaphysics is not posited as a purely intellectual construction.

The entire foregoing discussion rests upon an assumption which will be challenged from many quarters. Here is, for example, a psychologist, Prof. C. G. Jung, who would insist that all consciousness is necessarily characterised by 'exclusiveness, selection and discrimination' and that the *samādhi* of the Yogi,

claimed to involve a higher consciousness, a super-consciousness, seems to him to be equivalent "to an unconscious state". Evidently to him the present human consciousness is the final term of evolution or at least final to us at present.

But this position really involves many difficulties. Firstly, there is a wide experience of a whole tradition of 'yoga' practice, which bears testimony to the existence of states of consciousness, marked by experiences of delight and illumination, but which do not possess the qualifications of 'exclusiveness' etc. Secondly, the nature of the evolutionary process itself seems to justify the expectation of forms of consciousness higher to the human as there are consciousnesses lower to it in the animal realm. And then as in the animal at its higher stages there are clear indications of the commencement of the rational level of consciousness, so at the human there must be and there are indications of a still higher phase of conscious evolution. Further a philosophical argument seems also to lend support to the possibility of a higher emergence in consciousness. Moral life, the most distinctive characteristic of human consciousness, involves an essential conflict. But as on the intellectual side a contradiction cannot be final and does necessarily pre-suppose a higher position of synthesis, which accomodates and reconciles both the contradictories; so moral conflict does, to my mind, imply a position of conflict-made-good, of duty fulfilled, of a spontaneous-righteous-activity. That consciousness is not too foreign to us, though it is yet far from being normal to us.

Lastly, Jung's argument appears to lack cogency and involve contradiction and we will now turn to examine it. We will have first to state his position a little more fully. Personality means 'a unique—and indivisible unit or a "whole man".' But consciousness and unconsciousness, which are the two aspects of life 'do not make a whole when either is suppressed or damaged by the other'.⁷ However a collaboration gradually develops out of 'the reason and self-protective ways' of the consciousness and 'the chaotic life' of the unconscious. But the yogins, whom he recognises as the 'past-masters' in the art of attaining a wholeness in life, aim at "*samādhī*, an ecstatic condition that seems to be equivalent to an unconscious state".⁸ "In their case", he affirms, "the unconscious has devoured the ego-consciousness". The universal consciousness attained to in *samādhī*, he declares, is a 'contradiction in terms'. "An accurate application of the

⁷ Jung, *The Integration of the Personality*, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

methods of Pali-canon or of the yoga-sutras", he is prepared to grant, "produces a remarkable extension of consciousness. But the contents of consciousness lose in clearness of detail with increasing extension. In the end, consciousness becomes vast but dim, with an infinite multitude of objects merging into an indistinct totality—a state in which the subjective and objective are almost completely identical".⁹

Now, Jung believes that the yogin does attain to a wholeness of life, though that he achieves, says he, by reducing the conscious to the unconscious. But it passes one's comprehension how 'wholeness' which implies a single principle of organisation in all the elements of conscious life, can be accounted for by the unconscious, which is recognised to be chaotic in character. The conscious is evolutionally an instrument of adaptation for the organism to its environment. Thus this principle which is essential to the concept of a true 'wholeness' and not a relative unification, which a moral rule too will provide for, leads us beyond consciousness as well as unconsciousness. Does it not by itself necessitate the positing of another sphere of consciousness, the character of which is marked by an urge towards a complete wholeness? And this being the deepest potentiality or possibility of man, realisable in the future, the sphere of consciousness containing it may be called the super-conscious.

But Jung says, "I am unable to separate an unconscious below from an unconscious above, since I find intelligence and purposiveness below as well as above". This identification of the unconscious and super-conscious is unwarranted, when the nature and principle of action of the two are different. The intelligence and purposiveness, possessed by the unconscious, which deserves at the human level the name 'chaotic' must surely be different from the intelligence and purposiveness of the super-conscious, as implied by the perfection of a completed wholeness, which is still higher to man's normal status.

Further, the *Samādhī* of the yogin, the supreme wholeness that it implies, surely cannot be an unconscious condition of the chaotic type. It is also not an ordinary conscious state as it lacks 'exclusiveness' etc. Well, that is exactly the super-conscious state of yoga. And, it may be recalled, that though *Samādhī* lacks distinct objective presentations, it does, however, at the will of yogin, enable him to acquire distinct clairvoyant cognitions. Besides that, it always involves a general illumination and delight. Thus it cannot be an unconscious condition.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Another consideration too in this connection is relevant. The yogin in his practice proceeds by an intensification of attention. How could the end of such process, one fails to understand, be a complete lapse of attention? Jung evidently has argued out his decision for himself in a strange manner. It appears as though in reaching his decision he was carried by just the consideration that distinct presentations, which are always there in our normal consciousness, must necessarily be always there in all consciousness and they being not present in *Samādhi*, therefore, it could not be a conscious condition *i.e.* it must be unconscious.

Thus the possibility of a higher consciousness than the present human one is a concrete possibility resting upon a lot of evidence and reasoning. And it cannot be easy for a scientist or sceptic like Jung to knock out the bottom from the case of yoga, by saying that the present consciousness being the highest and the final, a transition to anything higher is out of the question.

We will now turn to some other psychological issues of our subject.

The psycho-analytical psychologist will surely have interest in yoga if by the pragmatic test, which is incidentally the test employed by him in proof of his own hypotheses, he can find that by yoga conflicts can be resolved and an increasing wholeness realised in life. This wholeness will, of course, be tested in empirical terms of greater capacity of concentration, self-composure and whole-hearted joyful action. I believe if it could be shown that these effects do follow from a systematic and serious practice of yoga, surely by the pragmatic test, whatever its metaphysical assumptions, it would have shown its efficiency as a technique, though not for raising the abnormal and disordered persons to the level of normality, but carrying further normally ordered or disordered persons to a higher level of joyfulness and efficiency of life.

It would be most interesting to compare the two techniques—that of psycho-analysis and of yoga. Psycho-analysis looks back and further back until in an individual's mental history the conflicts of early childhood are reached. These are slowly raised to consciousness by which fact itself they are resolved. Now what exactly happens in the act of their being made conscious? The individual under the guidance of the psycho-analyst through free-association and dream-interpretation activity learns to look on them with an objectivity and detachment, the emotional accompaniment thus dropping out almost altogether.

Transference is a further phenomena involved in the process, but that is an intermediate step in effecting the dissociation. In essence, to my mind, the process does admit of a reduction to the simple formula that old conflicts or old conflicting attachments or identifications with certain seekings undergo, by being consciously entertained with the eye of an observer, very nearly as the psycho-analyst views them, a radical change. The experiences of the conflicts are now looked upon as 'being there' as 'being other than the individual', the result is that the identification is resolved and the attachment broken. The patient becomes freed from the repressions, whose strength of oppression on the individual lies just in the fact of unconscious identification of self with certain impulses.

I have deliberately left out references to the sexual theory and other controversial elements of psycho-analysis and confined myself to what I take to be essential to the psycho-analytical technique.

The psycho-analytical process presupposes a patient of mental disorder, but who is not so much disordered as to be unable to co-operate with the psycho-analyst and lacks the will to be cured. The patient, the psycho-analyst and the will to be cured are, as it were, the postulates of the psycho-analytical process.

Let us now delineate the yogic process. The yogic process is essentially forward-looking in its attitude. It, in fact, discourages occupying yourself with the imperfections present or past and insists that you think, occupy yourself with and increasingly attend to what you want to be and that this must be done with growing faith and confidence that you can become, that. This 'wanting to be that' is to be whole-hearted and sincere to be effective. This activity in yogic terminology is called aspiration and is sharply distinguished from desiring. 'Desire' as a psychological fact is an ideationally felt impulse to action. Desire is the term which, J. Ward observes, covers "the cases in which the subject is incited to action by ideas, distinct from percepts". Further says he, "to constitute a definite state of desire there must be an obstacle to the realisation of the desideratum—not an absolute one, for then at the most, we should long or wish—but only an obstacle to its realisation by means of the actions its representation has aroused".¹⁰

Desire is thus an impulse which is aroused by an idea instead of a percept, but otherwise the character of the two is

¹⁰ J. Ward, *Psychological Principles*, p. 283.

the same, as both tend to act individualistically. However, starting with impulse and then developing desires, when ideas begin to be formed, the human individual slowly effects an organisation amongst them and thus comes to have a character.

This character consists of a few dispositional units formed round a few sentiments, which amongst themselves display a relative sort of adjustment. Psychologically a perfect character would be one in which all the impulses and desires find an effective organisation round a broad-based sentiment like love for truth.

Now, we would like to inquire into the nature of the process which leads to the development of such one master sentiment and such ideal character. Obviously persistent seeking for the ideal of truth is the first thing. This seeking is different from the seekings of impulses and desires, as it does not possess for its object particular perceptual fact or a representation of it in idea.

The object here is the universal truth as such. In impulse and desire, in the strict sense, the conation has a particular fact as object, which it seeks to realise singly as a sovereign force and the satisfaction too, at the completion of the conation, is appropriated as an exclusive fact by the conscious agent. In the case of truth the object is a universal fact and at any rate at the last stage of its development the seeking will not tend to work singly as a sovereign force to the exclusion of other rival tendencies, but rather the total force of character will act and the satisfaction too that will attend it will be of a more continuing nature, as here not a short-lived impulse is concerned but an abiding sentiment, which commands the whole psycho-physical being. Such process of seeking, yoga calls aspiration, and it must replace all acting by impulses and desires. Impulses and desires being particular conations cannot find amongst themselves a principle of unity, and, therefore, the best organisation that they can develop is rather that of an adjustment by external checks. Aspiration, as a process of deeper activity, which I have attempted to characterise by the nearest psychological analogy, fundamentally tends, as it were, to impersonalise personality. The individual in the language of yoga has to transcend his egoistic personality—the personality organised on the basis of a self-regarding sentiment and involving an essential contrast with not-self and live as soul or spirit.

Soul or spirit by its very nature, it will be philosophically and yogically argued, comprehends the manifold of phenomena

under its unity. Therefore while the phenomena of mental seekings amongst themselves present disparity and conflict, the soul, when the conscious agent starts living at that level, will, of itself, achieve a most real unity. Aspiration, yogically speaking, is the deep-seated seeking of the soul for the realisation of its full expression.

The above attempt to describe the process of aspiration in some sort of empirical language of psychology may in fact be unjustified. Aspiration as the deepest yearning of the individual is not a common phenomena at all and has so far not been noticed by psychology as a distinct type of conation. But some occupation with *sādhana* has already given me the experience, and if I have not incorrectly observed, it is altogether a distinct type of inner activity. It is definitely different from volition involved in moral effort, where a sense of conflict is necessarily present. In aspiration there is no sense of conflict or even rival claims. It is like a spontaneous and free surging of energy from within. Further what has been practically the most interesting experience in this connection is that the deliberation and resolution of the moral effort in dealing with a temptation or a besetting sin work out to be very much more painful and less successful a method as compared with that of sincere aspiration for what you want to be, accompanied by a rejection or dissociation from what you want to get rid of. Such experience, to my mind, may have much value for an ultimate psychological appreciation of the yogic principle of aspiration.

By an attempt at an introspection, in which particular perceptions and ideas are not fixated upon but an attempt is made to get deep down and inmost in one's consciousness, after some practice of *sādhana* one becomes conscious of an activity as such with just the characteristics of being interiormost and arising from great depth. This activity seems sometimes to take up its own objects of seeking and the result of this seeking is that those objectives are more easily made a real part of the character.

The question is, what is this activity of aspiration which possesses such high efficiency for effecting changes in character? This is very different from the method of developing new units of character through drilling *i.e.* repeated performance of the action of the desired kind. In aspiration there is a concentrated activity of attention directed towards an objective, which sometimes, however, seems to be absent.

But the most remarkable thing is the result that the object,

the trend to be acquired or an old one to be got rid of, is relatively much more easily achieved.

It is an issue in Psychology, how to acquire a new habit or how to get rid of an old one? In the latter case, you are advised to attempt to form a habit contradictory to the one you want to get rid of. Yogically this would be considered unsound. You must first consider habit not as an outward action but as an inner seeking and urge—a motivation. This motivation itself you must reject, inwardly dissociate yourself from. You must be able to see it as an objective fact, other than yourself. That inner discipline itself achieves for you the freedom from the undesirable habit. Any positive habit to be acquired is made the object of a keen concentration and whole-hearted aspiration and as the will for it is cultivated the action becomes almost automatic. These facts are a common experience of those engaged in yogic *sādhana*.

It must further be added that aspiration and rejection must proceed in a state of faith and confidence *i.e.* firm belief that the possibility that I am wanting to realise is realisable. A state of doubt, anxiety or nervousness frustrates the effectivity of the process.

We were attempting to describe how the ideal character with its one master-sentiment would be developed. We have said the first thing would be to persistently and whole-heartedly seek for the realisation of the truth-ideal. This seeking will increasingly tend to bring all the various individualistic impulses under the unity of that sentiment. This process, we said, was almost the activity of aspiration of yoga. However, a long practice under all the variety of situations of life would be necessary. From the point of view of the practice of Integral Yoga an accompanying process of rejection must also be availed of every time that a contrary movement takes place in mind. Rejection is a technical and typical process of yoga like that of aspiration. Psychologically, it consists of a concentrated activity of attention seeking dissociation from the undesirable thing, which, as a result of it, comes to be viewed as an impartial objective fact present 'there', as in fact other than the self, almost foreign to it. In rejecting a motivation, you seek to withdraw all your will from it; the previous identification of self with it is sought to be dissolved and a dissociation achieved.

A third process is that of self-opening. This involves a direct reference to the metaphysics of yoga. The individual seeks to open himself out with a thoroughly receptive frame of

mind and call in the Supreme Consciousness to transform him. The attitude towards the Supreme Consciousness is one of complete surrender and trust as in a genuine attitude of love.

Empirically, surrender involves a will to give up all personal egoistic preferences. This is a movement towards dissociation from particular preferences to acquire just one undivided preference for the perfect consciousness, which the sadhaka seeks to make the one governing and guiding principle of his life. On the metaphysical side it involves the well-known principle of Grace, which means that certain preparatory conditions on the part of the sadhaka being given, the higher consciousness of God and the Guru comes in to operate in the consciousness of the sadhaka to intensify and relatively fulfil his seeking. That the seekings of the sadhaka are answered and fulfilled in ways that take the sadhaka by surprise and which he fails to understand as the direct and legitimate outcome of his own effort, is a stage that comes more fully when the individual is conscious of there being an intense seeking and longing for perfection working in him without the feeling that he is the author of the working. He feels that another power greater than his own has taken charge of his inner activity. Experiences of the operation of Grace are most varied and many of them may be purely subjective constructions but surely there are experiences of it which, after some progress has been made, can be felt as possessing a force of objectivity and as going beyond one's own self and character. A strict psychological explanation of such experiences can be easily attempted in terms of the subconscious, but I am not sure whether that explanation will suffice for all cases. Whereas the layman too often objectifies his experience and assigns independent sources as the cause, the psychological standpoint while correcting the extremeness of that attitude itself goes to the opposite extreme of denying all independent objective factor except that of the perceptual kind or of the nature of social suggestion. But the work and conclusions of the incipient departments of Parapsychology and Psychical Research do already appear to compel a widening of the basis of Psychology. This is coming about and as the discovery of the subconscious and abnormal mental phenomena by medical practice have served to widen and deepen normal psychology, so will a scientific understanding of the super-conscious mind revealed by the discipline of yoga and these growing branches of Psychology add a new dimension to normal consciousness and further enrich its meaning. But this is yet a hope and an expectation.

Integral yoga, we have said before, aims at a radical change in the basis of our consciousness from its egoistic organisation to a universalistic mode of experience. This it calls transformation. It rejects impulse and desire, the ordinary principle of consciousness operative at the present level of human evolution, and seeks to shift on to the basis of the spirit, which it visualises as a future stage of evolution of consciousness, to be reached by nature's own activity in slow degrees, as was even the change from the animal consciousness to human rational consciousness effected, but which is capable of a quick realisation through the intensive activity of yoga.

Sublimation is the term that one would be reminded of from psycho-analysis in connection with a discussion of transformation. But sublimation, which consists of a diversion of instinctive energy into channels morally and socially approved, is essentially a subconscious process. Freud worked out in great detail the nature of the process of repression and it is a pity that in his entire writings there are only a few almost passing references to the process of sublimation. Transformation, on the other hand, is all the process in yoga for turning the energies of our present nature into the mould of a higher consciousness, which, being so done are automatically greatly heightened and intensified. Thus yoga undertakes what psycho-analysis altogether leaves out. However, in the 'New Introductory Lectures' Freud shows that he was not unconscious of the possibilities of a process like that of yoga. While discussing the problem of the growth of personality in his chapter on "The Anatomy of Personality", he states that the whole matter consists in really synthesising the impulsive *id* with the authoritative idealist *superego* into a realistic *ego*, which understands reality and knows how to react to it. The process is compared to that of reclaiming the Zuyder Zee, so that where *id* was, there shall ego be. But Freud does not visualise the possibility of a complete synthesis. There he adds almost in a spirit of ultimate hope that perhaps the method adopted by the mystics may completely achieve it.

We have ordinarily a feeling as though man were the highest term of evolution. Of course, he is the highest at the present moment. But there is absolutely nothing to suggest that in the process of evolution man, though highest at the moment, is also the final product. On the other hand, it seems obvious that if consciousness has gradually widened out its powers and capacities from the microbe to man, then from man,

in whom consciousness is limited and cramped enough, further advance should be possible. That envisages naturally a consciousness higher than the present human one. That consciousness is yet to us superconscious. This superconsciousness already reveals itself to us in some states known to abnormal psychology like the hypnotic state and the artistic and religious experiences in which some normal powers of mind become greatly heightened. Just as we now know that hypnotic state as even those of dream and sleep are allied to the waking condition and not radically different from it as was once believed, so probably it will be discovered that the superconscious states involve certain intensification and reorganisation of the normal functions of mind. The transition from the sub-rational to the rational consciousness has been gradual and a continuity between them is now established, in spite of the qualitative difference affirmed all along in the middle ages. We know what seeds of experiences in the higher animals point beyond the average level of animal consciousness, which to us today clearly appear to have paved the way for the evolution of human consciousness. A similar discernment of experiences in the present human consciousness can show us the way for conceiving the next stage of conscious evolution, which seems to be a necessary corollary from the fact of evolution as such. The change-over to that stage is the aim of yoga and the passage from this to that consciousness is called by it *transformation*.

Psycho-analysis is directly concerned with the discovery of the past conflicts which have been repressed and made unconscious. All mental disorders are due to these repressions and therefore one of the most general truths of Psycho-analysis is that all conflict and neurosis is endogenic. That means that the cause of mental disorders lies within us in our mentality; that when one complains against particular conditions of life, he is in fact, unconsciously though, complaining and showing discontentment with certain inner propensities. He is betraying in truth an inner lack of harmony. Thus Psycho-analysis aims at the establishment of a relative inner harmony. But how does it achieve that? Through the methods of free association and dream interpretation the psycho-analyst seeks to detect the repressions, which he attempts to dispose of by bringing them up into the clear light of consciousness.

Inner harmony is also a principal object of yoga. The psycho-analyst will, therefore, naturally ask how does yoga deal with repressions and past conflicts, which divide us inwardly?

Primarily, as we have described before, yoga relies upon aspiration or the seeking for the ideal, which by itself unconsciously rounds off angularities of past life and redirects the energies of life into the channel leading to the ideal. 'Self-opening', one of the triple movements comprising the yogic process, affords a situation of relaxation in the mind, involving as it does basically an attitude of surrender and receptivity (not from without but from within itself). This state of relaxation is evidently profounder than that demanded by the psycho-analyst for free association. Now, in this state of relaxation past impulsions do tend to automatically surge up directly or throw up their untoward reactions. One of the very first things in Integral Yoga is to try to become increasingly more conscious of the motives and impulsions of all the movements that take place during waking hours as well as those of sleep. It is a stern discipline of unflinching self-searching and self-observation. And as the subconscious impulsions are detected, they are, where they happen to be contrary to the ideal of truth and perfection, rejected. That goes on persistently and patiently for years and years and though complete harmony may be distant, an increasing sense of joy and wholeness one starts feeling soon.

Meditation too, in Integral Yoga, is not a method of suppressing thought movements by the main force of attention. A successful hour of meditation is a joy-giving thing. It is marked by relaxation and spontaneity rather than strain and self-exertion. And the way for controlling thoughts is that of letting them take their course while you 'stand apart' and watch on. Interestingly enough through this dis-identification the thoughts, as it were, lose the energy of their movement and a relative stillness is created in the mind. This is, however, the description applicable to one of the several forms which meditation as a process may take.

Meditation of the above kind can obviously serve as an instrument of katharsis for repressed experiences. There are states of meditation in which, as experience shows, things surge up from within and light up, by supplying the causal connection, a whole trend of one's behaviour. Subtlest longings and attachments do come up to the surface as if from nowhere and, having come once, on a second recurrence they already appear much paler.

According to Integral Yoga doing concrete works, without any meditation whatsoever, can by itself serve the same purpose of building up the personality. But then the works must be done

not with a constraint or under a compulsion, but always as a spontaneous out-flowing of the joyful activity of life, as offering, as actions done out of love. Such actions will also be characterised by a sanction of the whole will and not by the sense of a fragmentary pull that accompanies sense cravings. All other movements must be recognised and admitted as contrary and rejected from behaviour.

Similarly, a proper play of emotions as contemplated by Bhakti Yoga, for example, does by itself also achieve the same purpose.

Integral Yoga covers all these manifold expressions of personality and turns them to account for the growth of a fuller personality. However, depending upon the stronger trend of an individual's mental make-up or in view of his peculiar requirement at a particular stage of development, he may find works more helpful than meditation or Bhakti *i.e.* the emotional approach of love and admiration to Reality and Life more suited than that of intellectual understanding.

But in a measure they are all represented in each personality and in a higher personality emotion, knowledge and activity must increasingly attain to a harmonisation.

Psycho-analytical discovery of the basic truth of the endogenic character of mental troubles is a valuable empirical substantiation of an equally basic truth of yogic science. In yoga it is by the Ātmā that one sees the Ātmā in the Ātmā and one's own self is looked upon as one's only friend, as also the only enemy.

This subjective vision of yoga becomes very much more easily intelligible in the light of the psychological truth that all maladaptations with the environment involve in the last instance conflicts within the mind.

Besides this, a number of other findings of psycho-analysis do also make certain principles of yoga more easily understandable to the modern mind. Utter sincerity and honesty of purpose is the first condition of yogic undertaking. But one hardly realises the force of this truth so vividly as when one pursues psycho-analytical case-histories and sees the eye-opening truth in living reality how in each case the cause of trouble lay in some self-deception, in an attempt at hood-winking oneself, in the failure to see a fact of personal life fairly and squarely, in an act of insincerity and dishonesty. Such study so heartily convinces a man that any insincerity, any dishonesty left any-

where lurking in his personality is bound to cause him trouble sooner or later.

Psycho-analysis is primarily a study of the modes and techniques of the working of the subconscious. Each one of them is a particular type of self-deception. Projection, introjection, rationalisation are the so many forms of defence reactions involving in one form or the other a self-deception. The fox, in the well-known story, not succeeding in plucking the much wished-for grapes, declares them sour. Surely he is deceiving himself. Yogic practice necessarily requires a discovery and disposal of each such self-deception. Without that the realisation of a harmonious personality is obviously out of the question.

At one place in 'The Life Divine' a sentence reads,—

'Nothing can endure if it has not a will in our nature, a sanction of the Purusha, a sustained pleasure in some part of the being, even though it be a secret or a perverse pleasure, to keep it in continuance'.¹¹

This embodies a fundamental principle of yogic practice and it is also the central truth of mental life, as recognised by more schools than one of contemporary psychology. It ranks as the crowning achievement of Freud that he discovered that our daily errors like a slip of the tongue are motivated. The dreams are 'wish-fulfilments'. And even the symptoms of the neurotic are willed by him. Thus there is nothing that happens in us which does not rest on a support of our sanction and will. Psycho-analytical reading almost on every page affords a vivid realisation of this truth of human nature.

But while so much has been said in approbation of Psycho-analysis, it might serve to mislead readers if we do not state the limitations of the doctrine, from the stand-point of yoga or a more comprehensive view of human nature. Psycho-analysis arose out of medical practice in connection with the treatment of mental disorders. Its generalisations arose out of a restricted data. No doubt they have already been quite widely verified, but the verifications have been carried out on similar kind of data, *i.e.*, mental abnormalities elsewhere. Therefore there is obviously a defect in making them universal truths of all human nature. Yogic discipline provides a field of a new kind of mental data and one should really like to know with exactness as to the limitations that this data will impose upon the generalisations of psycho-analysis.

¹¹ Vol. II, Part I, pp. 147-148.

MacDougall while appreciating the genius and the services of Freud for Psychology has strongly felt that his conclusions suffer from the defect of over-generalisation.

Psycho-analysis, according to Sri Aurobindo, takes a part of our nature and 'attributes to it. . . an action out of all proportion to its true role in the nature' (Bases of Yoga, p. 118). Psycho-analysis is, in fact, not used as a substitute for yoga, as a method of raising the level of harmony in the normal man, since it is intended for the treatment of disorders of mind. However, self-analysis is sometimes recommended and attempted. In such cases, in particular, though the risk would seem to exist for mentally disordered too, one should first strengthen one's sense of the ideal. This ideal is not to be a moral ideal involving by its very nature suppressions and repressions, but just a will for more joy and efficiency, a will for complete recovery. This being not given, there is obviously a danger in the person developing a habit of indulging in the recollection of past pleasures. He will then not succeed in achieving the emancipation from the attachments through failure to visualise the past experience with the necessary objectivity, a mental rejection and dissociation being essential to a release. Sri Aurobindo sums up his advice in the sentence: "First, one should make the higher mind and vital strong and firm and full of light and peace from above; afterwards one can open up or even dive into the subconscious with more safety and some chance of a rapid and successful change" (*Ibid.*, p. 120). He complains that the psycho-analysts "look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities", while, in fact, he affirms, "the superconscious, not the subconscious, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here". Further, "you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest". (*Ibid.*, p. 123). Therefore for understanding the sub-conscious, which psycho-analysis seeks to investigate, it is necessary to know the working of the superconscious mind, that is, the ranges of consciousness higher and superior to the normal waking consciousness.

When the necessary caution stated above has been observed, Sri Aurobindo is prepared to concede the essential truth of psycho-analysis that "the process of raising up the lower movements into the full light of consciousness in order to know and

deal with them is inevitable; for there can be no complete change without it". (*Ibid.*, p. 121).

It is indeed a short-coming of the entire psycho-analytical thought that it betrays a complete lack of appreciation of the power of a heartily accepted ideal on an individual. It exclusively occupies itself with the analysis of antecedent mental conditions. This has in one way done good to the science of Psychology, since it insistently asked for the cause of every kind of mental phenomena, even errors of daily behaviour and dreams. And the achievements of psycho-analysis in these as in those of neurosis have been simply startling. But the cause admitted by Freud is the invariable and unconditional antecedent of material nature. For mind, on the other hand, consistent with its essentially teleological and purposive character, the proper cause can only be a teleological fact.

Experience reveals that the vision of an ideal, not only a situation of threat to some basic instinct, releases in an individual energies undreamt of before. The question for Psychology is, what is exactly this power of an ideal on an individual? This is an aspect of human personality which is yet awaiting scientific investigation.

Psycho-analysis, we have said above, takes a strict deterministic stand like that of physical natural science. But we have also said that a mental patient amenable to direct psycho-analytic treatment should be willing to co-operate with the analyst and must not lack the will to be cured. Now it strikes me to ask, what is this will to be cured? Is it not a purposive seeking, the force and power of an ideal of mental health? And it is interesting, it is this one fact which, though not directly aimed at, is still the thing necessarily achieved. The will to be cured increasingly grows stronger as the analysis progresses. Coue directly aimed at intensifying just this will through his formula "I am getting better day by day". Psycho-analysis rightly objects to this method, as involving a process of suppressing and sugar-coating the bitter experiences of the past. The primary objective for it, therefore, becomes the disposal of the conflicts and repressions, but it is lost sight of that the indirect but necessary result of it is the intensification of the will to be cured. And for the removal of the resistances of past conflicts the will gains in strength more easily. But may not one affirm that the cure is really achieved by that will and that the resolution of the conflicts does not directly achieve the result. The

conflicts resolved just clear the way for the healthy will of the normal man to come to its own.

The method of Integral Yoga makes a revealing study in the light of the above discussion. It recognises in the first instance the value of seeking with perfect sincerity and whole-heartedness the ideal of perfection. And, secondly, it admits, in fact enjoins, the necessity of becoming conscious of the contents of one's subconscious. The various disguises of the ego one must learn to see through and the proper insight must be developed, which will enable the sadhaka to understand all the subtle and indirect reactions thrown up by the unconscious mind on to the conscious plane. At the earlier stages of the sadhana that is really what the living of an inner life means.

From the above it becomes an easy transition to a consideration of yoga in relation to the psychology of will and attention. We asked above, how does an ideal work on an individual? The psychology of attention may give some answer to it. Attention is, according to a relatively more agreed psychological characterisation, a mental activity involving interest, which seeks to dwell on its object and has the effect of making it more vivid. It is essentially progressive in character so that it tends increasingly to occupy itself with what is obscure and make it distinct. Now in the matter of achieving a practical result the psychology of attention affirms that "the general principle is that the 'doing of something', the thought of something to be done, occupies consciousness to the exclusion or repression of conflicting suggestions, then the action follows". (Stout, Manual, p. 216). The same author cites from James a simple practical experiment, as demonstrative of the above, which anybody after a little practice can himself perform, so as to be able to appreciate the force of the principle. "Try to feel as if you were crooking your finger, whilst keeping it straight. In a minute it will fairly tingle with the imaginary change of position; yet it will not move sensibly because *its not really moving* is also a part of what you have in mind. Drop this idea, think of the movement purely and simply, with all the breaks off and Presto! it takes place with no effort at all" (*Ibid.*, p. 216). In abnormal cases people are led to do some most un-understandable types of actions like that of a man looking down from a precipice into the vast depth beneath, thinking what it would be like to throw himself down and then actually falling down. Now this takes place according to psychological observation and analysis for the reason that 'owing to the fascinating interest of the

thought, the *idea* of the action and its consequences obtrudes itself upon him with intense vividness, and he feels himself impelled to carry it into execution" (*Ibid.*, p. 645). Thus the exclusive concentration of attention on an idea, however improbable, under rather extraordinary circumstances itself effects its translation into action.

Now concentration of attention is a necessary achievement of yoga, but, while Rāja Yoga enjoins the development of the power through direct practice almost in the spirit of an athlete, integral yoga achieves it in a more incidental manner.

Through an increasing aspiration and self-opening to the ideal and an accompanying rejection of the contrary movements determined by conscious and sub-conscious impulses a wholeness of personality results. Such wholeness, as it progresses, makes concentration relatively a spontaneous development. This concentrated attention, when developed, will increasingly make the realisation of the object attended to easier.

Abnormal psychology presents a large number of phenomena, *e.g.* hypnosis, in which an extraordinary heightening of certain mental functions takes place. And we have today less mystification about the working of the hypnotic consciousness than it was sometime back. Attention and abnormal control and concentration give the key to the whole phenomenon. It may not be too much to guess in regard to the extraordinary powers possessed by the yogic consciousness that the intensive discipline of attention which accompanies it may largely be its secret. But the psychology of will and attention is yet in an undeveloped condition and one may expect that a better understanding of the process will make yoga more intelligible as also a fuller knowledge of yogic states might make the process of attention clearer.

The article has much exceeded its proper limits. But it has really aimed at a double purpose. While it has sought to give a psychological appreciation and introduction to the principles of Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, it has also suggested problems which yogic practice and experience present to Psychology. And here in the end I append in a more direct form what to my mind appear to be the psychological problems presented by yoga. It will obviously take much time to acquire a correct psychological insight into the workings of the yogic super-conscious; but whatever the time needed, I have no doubt that it will mean to Psychology, for a profounder and truer understanding of human nature, a very great

gain indeed. It will, as the recently acquired knowledge of the subconscious has done, provide a new dimension to our subject-matter of mind and consciousness.

Now the yogic states which offer a challenge to the modern psychological mind:

1. Visions are a fairly common thing in yogic practice and they occur many times with such suddenness that a connection with previous experiences is not easy to establish. They seem to occur as though independently of one's own mentality.

2. Stillness of mind is undoubtedly a real condition. Attention itself, whose nature according to psychological characterisation, is constant mobility, seems to become a steady, almost a stationary fact.

3. An experience of the welling up of joy as a sudden occasional experience without any train of ideas affords the enigmatic state of an objectless joy.

4. Aspiration, of which some description has been attempted above, is also a psychological problem. At times it is felt as an upward movement characterisable as being inmost to our experience and as arising from our very depth, but otherwise being objectless.

5. Experience of a descent of force as a distinct fact, which almost overtakes one unawares will also challenge the psychological attention.

6. Dreams undergo through sadhana a change in content and motivation and there seems to be a new type of symbolism at work.

7. The process of meditation also needs a clearer analysis. How it acts as a cathartic instrument as also the means for further progress?

Regarding the validity as fact of the above states and processes I for myself have no doubt. But a psychological clarification does not seem possible just now and perhaps the reason is that our present psychological terms are adapted to the description of the general waking consciousness, and, it appears, that as the base of experience and field of data become wider, the terms too shall have to be made elastic and given fresh form and meanings.

Sri Aurobindo and the Problem of Evil

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I thank the organizers of Sri Aurobindo Patha Mandir Annual for the great honour they have done me in inviting me for the third time in succession to contribute an article to this Annual. This year I have chosen a subject which is intensely practical. It is perhaps the most practical subject conceivable, for it is one which affects all men alike. Saints and sinners, householders and world-renouncing ascetics are equally interested in it. It is a question of fundamental importance for man and one in which he has taken an abiding interest ever since he began to reflect about himself and the world in which he lived.

There is also another reason why I have chosen this subject. It is that nowhere is the merit of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy so apparent as in the manner in which he has handled this most baffling of all problems. I was considerably amused sometime ago when a reviewer in the "Times Literary Supplement," in the course of his review of my book '*An Introduction to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*', remarked that the weakness of Sri Aurobindo was that he could not handle properly the problem of evil, and he went even to the length of suggesting that here he erred with the whole Hindu race¹. I felt that no criticism could be more unjust than this, for one of the strongest points in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy was the way in which it handled the problem of evil.

Sri Aurobindo steers clear of two extreme views of evil.

There are two extreme views of evil which, speaking in very general terms, we may say have been sponsored respectively by India and the West. The first extreme view, which found great

¹ The Reviewer's exact words are : "The test of a thinker in the last analysis is the way in which he handles the problem of Evil. Aurobindo cannot be said to have succeeded where other philosophers have failed. . . His chief limitation is that he does not realize the creative power of Ignorance; but here he errs with the whole Hindu race. Were there no mystery, life would lose all its savour. That is the last word of Western wisdom. Aurobindo and his countrymen cannot afford to neglect it." *Times Literary Supplement*, Jan. 9, 1943.

favour in our country in ancient times, looked upon evil as unreal and as a product of ignorance. In this view, evil existed so long as ignorance persisted in individual consciousness; with the lifting of the veil of ignorance evil would disappear. So long as this view ruled, the problem of evil could never acquire a cosmic status. For evil was regarded as a product of the operation of ignorance in individual consciousness, and consequently, it was felt that it would vanish with the appearance of true knowledge as dew did with the rising of the sun. The problem of evil, from this point of view, was also mainly a practical one. It was a problem of training the individual so that he might be in a position to receive the right knowledge. It was thus intimately connected with *yoga*, or rather, the solution of the problem was sought in *yoga*. On the whole, this was the standpoint of the Upanishads, and we find it very clearly stated in the following verse of the Chandogyanishad (vii.26.2):

न पश्यो मृत्युं पश्यति न रोगं नोत दुःखताम् ।
सर्वं ह पश्यः पश्यति सर्वमाप्नोति सर्वशः ॥

("The seer sees not death nor disease nor sorrow. He sees all and attains all entirely").

This verse makes it clear that evil persists only so long as the individual's consciousness is under the sway of ignorance. With the disappearance of ignorance, that is, when the individual becomes a seer, evil also melts away, and therefore, for the man who has the true vision, neither death nor disease nor sorrow has any existence. This is the usual standpoint of the Upanishads, but, as I have stated elsewhere,² the Upanishads also hint at what may be called cosmic salvation, that is to say, freedom of the whole world from evil.

In this standpoint there is no suggestion of the unreality of the world. On the contrary, the standpoint of the Upanishads may be said to be directly opposed to the view that the world is unreal. The idea of immanence of God in the world is what is chiefly stressed in the Upanishads, and this idea is a direct contradiction of the other idea, namely, that the world is unreal. That famous passage in the Brihadaranyakopanishad (3.8.8-9), where Yājñavalkya, in answer to Gārgī's question: "Across what, pray, is space woven, warp and woof?", gives what may

² Vide my third article on *The Philosophy of the Kathopanishad* (*The Vedanta Kesari*), Oct. 1943).

be called a teleological and moral proof of the existence of God, is a clear refutation of the view which became later stereotyped, namely, that the teaching of the Upanishads is the unreality or illusoriness of the world. After describing the Absolute in purely negative terms as 'not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, etc.', Yājñavalkya, in words which will ring in the ears of men as long as the human race will last, and the meaning of which it is not possible to misunderstand, says: "Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable the sun and the moon stand apart. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable the earth and the sky stand apart. Verily, O Gārgī at the command of that Imperishable the moments, the hours, the days, the nights, the fortnights, the months, the seasons, and the years stand apart. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable some rivers flow from the snowy mountains to the east, others to the west, in whatever direction each flows. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable men praise those who give, the gods are desirous of a sacrificer, and the fathers (are desirous) of the Manes-sacrifice"³. This passage is as strong an affirmation of the reality of the world as anything possibly can be. In the next passage Yājñavalkya gives a hint as to where evil is to be sought: "Verily, O Gārgī, if one performs sacrifices and worship and undergoes austerities in this world for many thousands of years, but without knowing that Imperishable, limited indeed is that work of his. Verily, O Gārgī, he who departs from this world without knowing that Imperishable is pitiable. But, O Gārgī, he who departs from this world, knowing that Imperishable is a Brāhmaṇa."⁴ The concluding portion of this famous utterance of Yājñavalkya: "Verily, O Gārgī, that Imperishable is the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the unthought Thinker, the un-understood Understander. Other than It there is naught that sees. Other than It there is naught that hears. Other than It there is naught that thinks. Other than It there is naught that understands. Across this Imperishable, O Gārgī, is space woven, warp and woof",⁵ shows also how evil is to be removed. It is ignorance which prevents a man from understanding that the Imperishable is the only seer, the only hearer, the only understander, that is responsible for evil. Remove this ignorance, and evil will be

³ Br. Up. 3. 8. 9, Hume's translation (*Vide Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, pp. 118-19).

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

removed automatically. In fact, there is no such thing as evil, for it is only a product of the individual's ignorance.

In this view, it should also be observed, there is no room for escapism. If the world is neither unreal nor evil, why should there be any talk of escape from the world? In fact, the illustrious speaker himself was a householder, as were also other sages and Rājārshis mentioned in this, as well as in other Upanishads. Escapism was a later growth. It arose as a deduction from the essential unreality of the world. The Upanishads advocated escape from the passions, which is very different from escape from the world.

The other extreme view which Sri Aurobindo equally avoids is the one which has generally found favour in the West and which treats evil as a permanent feature of the world. Evil in this view is quite as real as good, and the problem of evil is the problem of the coexistence of two totally opposed orders, one of good and another of evil, in the same world. Usually, however, good is supposed to be the higher reality, and God is identified with it. This, however, makes the problem still more insoluble. It was bad enough when the problem was one of explaining the coexistence in the same world of two totally opposed realities. But it became much worse when philosophy was faced with the question how God, who was identified with good, could allow that which was the direct opposite of his nature to exist. In whatever way the problem was put, it was bound to clash with some aspect or other of God as good. Either it would challenge His omniscience or His omnipotence or His benevolence. If His omniscience was somehow saved, His omnipotence or His benevolence would be jeopardised, and *vice versa*. For example, if it was suggested that God created evil, knowing it to be evil, this would no doubt save God's omniscience, but it would seriously call in question either His omnipotence or His benevolence. For it would mean either that He had no power to stop evil, which would amount to an admission that He is not omnipotent, or it would mean that God could have prevented evil if He wanted to, but did not do so, which would call in question His benevolence. If again, it was suggested that with the best of intentions He created the world, but could not foresee that it would turn out to be evil, this would directly challenge His omniscience.

The problem of evil thus presents innumerable difficulties to the philosophers of the West, as we see clearly from the very able discussion of it which we find in Martineau's *Study of*

Religion or in Prof. Joad's book *God and Evil*. It is clear that the Western philosophers have set before themselves an insoluble problem. If evil and good are regarded as equally real and as absolute contradictories, if all attempts at reduction of the one in terms of the other are unceremoniously rejected, then it is clear that we can never arrive at a unitary conception of the universe, and the sooner this is frankly acknowledged and the whole problem given up as absolutely hopeless, the better.

But this is not the whole of the matter. A great part—perhaps the most important part—of the difficulty of these Western philosophers lies in their conception of God and of His relation to the world. They have such a horror of pantheism that rather than fall into it, they would accentuate the difference between God and the world, so much so that God is left completely outside the world and His relation to the world becomes in consequence purely external. With such a purely external view of the relation between God and the world it is manifestly impossible to construct a unitary system, and all attempts in this direction, therefore, at the call of monism, leave too much evidence of ill-conceived and hasty work. Indeed, the essential weakness of the Western way of dealing with the problem of evil lies in its conception of God. Unless God's relations with the world become thoroughly immanent, there is no possibility of solving the problem of evil.

The usual answer to this criticism is what is contained in the statement of the reviewer in the "Times Literary Supplement": "Unless there is mystery, life would lose all its savour." Mystery for mystery, is there less mystery in the Divine immanence in the world than in His transcendence? Rather there is more. It is certainly a much greater mystery that God out of pure self-delight should reproduce Himself in the universe than that the world should go on in its own way without the guidance of the Divine Light. The former is a true spiritual mystery, the latter at best the mystery of unexplained mechanical process.

Wanted an 'Umwertung aller Werte' in the conception of Evil.

If the problem of evil, therefore, is to be tackled, it must be done by a revolutionary change in the methods so far employed. Such a change must come from an altogether new outlook, from an absolutely fresh standpoint. If, therefore, the problem of evil is not to remain one of the unsolved riddles of the world, it is imperatively necessary that we should give up

the old outlook, whether of the East or of the West, and approach it with an absolutely fresh mind. Our own ancient view suffers from the defect that it does not take evil seriously. In the language of the reviewer in the "Times Literary Supplement", it 'ignores the creative power of ignorance'. Evil may, and indeed must, in the ultimate analysis, be reduced to good, but this does not mean that its presence in the world to-day can be ignored. In fact, if we look at the history of the problem in our country, the most curious thing which strikes us is the complete *volte face* which it has undergone in the course of centuries. Starting originally from the standpoint of evil as an unreality, it turned a complete somersault, on account of its evil association with the doctrine of the illusoriness of the world, and became a problem in escapism. But escapism, far from being a necessary implication of the unreality of evil, is rather a direct contradiction of it. For if you want to escape from the world, do you not *ipso facto* admit it to be evil? If there was no evil in the world, why should there arise any necessity at all of seeking escape from it? Yet, curiously enough, the advocates of escapism still continued to do lip service to the original doctrine of the Upanishads, namely, that evil is unreal, although they had departed fundamentally from it.

The Western view, on the contrary, is a frank admission that evil is a permanent feature of the world. The Western philosopher, in fact, resents very strongly any attempt to whittle down evil. He is unnecessarily emphatic in declaring that there is evil in the world, for who is going to deny it? At least not we. Why proclaim from the housetops a very obvious fact?

But granting that evil is a feature of the world to-day, that which the Western philosopher wants to affirm does not follow. It does not follow, that is to say, that because evil is a feature of the world *to-day*, therefore, it will remain a feature of it *for all time*. Here, in fact, is the crux of the whole situation. And here we need a radical transformation, an "*Umwertung aller Werte*", of our whole outlook. •

The principle of this "Umwertung" is Evolution

And the principle which will effect this '*Umwertung*', which will cause this radical transformation of our approach to the problem of evil, is Evolution. It is the principle which will reveal to us the secret of the world-process. We may call it the message of Prajāpati, the great message which not only

human affairs, but all forces and events in Nature proclaim. And like that other great message of his, proclaimed by thunder, which has one meaning for gods, another for men and a third for devils⁶, it also has a triple meaning. For, as Sri Aurobindo views it, it means three things: widening, heightening and integration. I have explained these terms in my book *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, and I cannot do better than quote what I have said there: "First of all it (evolution) means a widening of the field, providing greater room for the operation of each principle as it emerges; secondly, it means an ascent from grade to grade, from the lower to the higher; and thirdly, it means taking up within itself, as soon as it reaches a higher grade, all the previous lower grades and transforming them, so that at each step of the ascent, there is not merely an ascent to a higher principle, but a lifting up and transformation of all the lower grades. Integration thus implies a descent of the higher principle into all the lower ones; in fact, it is ascent through descent. Thus, when the principle of mind emerges, there is not merely the emergence of this principle, but a descent of it into all the lower ones, leading to an uplifting and transformation of matter and life, so that life and matter become different after the emergence of mind from what they were before its emergence."

This triple-faced principle of evolution is the central truth of the universe, and it is the failure to understand its nature and appreciate its value which is the chief cause of the inadequate handling of the problem of evil, both in our country and in the West. The most important thing about it is that it is a spiritual principle. It is, in fact, the reverse of the

⁶ See Br. Up. 5. 2. I give below Hume's translation of it (*Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 150):

"The threefold offspring of Prajāpati—gods, men and devils (asuras)—dwelt with their father Prajāpati as students of sacred knowledge (brahmacharya).

Having lived the life of a student of sacred knowledge, the gods said: 'Speak to us, sir'. To them he spoke this syllable 'Da' (द) 'Did you understand?' 'We did understand', said they. 'You said to us, "Restrain yourselves" (dāmyata)'. 'Yes (Om)', said he. 'You did understand'.

So then the men said to him: 'Speak to us, sir'. To them then he spoke this syllable 'Da'. 'Did you understand?' 'We did understand', said they 'You said to us, "Give (datta)"'. 'Yes (Om)', said he, "You did understand."

So then the devils said to him, 'Speak to us, sir'. To them he spoke this syllable 'Da'. 'Did you understand?' "We did understand", said they, 'You said to us, "Be compassionate (dayadhvam)"'. 'Yes (Om)', said he. 'You did understand'.

This same thing does the divine voice here, thunder, repeat: Da! Da! Da! that is, 'Restrain yourselves, Give, Be compassionate'. One should praise this same triad: self-restraint, giving, compassion."

process of creation. As creation is the self-involution of the Spirit in matter, life and mind, so evolution is the return of the Spirit back from matter, life and mind unto itself. From this general nature of evolution it is clear that it will not stop until the whole world attains the status of the Absolute Spirit or Sachchidananda. It is therefore a contradiction in terms to speak of evolution and yet assert the eternal existence of evil. If evolution is a fact, then evil can never be a permanent feature of the world.

If we keep in mind these fundamental truths of evolution, we can easily see why our traditional way of handling the problem of evil failed. It failed, because it missed the fundamental drift of evolution, which was not the production of a few released souls, but the general uplift of the whole world, a transmutation of it into a higher status. Towards this general uplift, towards this transformation into a higher status, this method of securing for the individual escape from evil did not contribute an iota. The world continued to grovel in darkness and ignorance, in spite of the presence of a few happy individuals who had obtained personal liberation by detaching themselves from it. This clearly shows that if man is to attain the status which he is destined to attain, the means to it must be very different from the traditional method followed in our country.

The Western method of handling the problem of evil is also vitiated by the same neglect of the principle of evolution. The Western philosopher is satisfied that evil is a feature of the world to-day, and from this he jumps to the conclusion that it will remain a feature of it eternally. In other words, he totally ignores the principle of evolution. If evolution is a fact, then the present low condition of the world may not give us any indication of what the future may have in store for it. The present stage may be only a preliminary stage in the evolution of the world; there may be much higher stages of evolution which have yet to unfold themselves, and if we pass any judgment upon the nature of the world from what we see of it to-day, such judgment must be pronounced premature and hasty. If it is retorted on behalf of the Western standpoint that it does not take into account the future at all, and that all that it says about the condition of the world refers, and is meant to refer, only to the present, then our answer will be that if you leave out the future, then you drop the most important part of the problem and deal only with what may be called its skeleton,

The problem of problems is how the world is going to shape itself in the future, whether evil will still cling to it as it undoubtedly does to-day or whether there is the possibility of its being freed from the incubus of sin and suffering which is such a distressing feature of it at the present moment.

But it is not true that the Western thinker, in discussing the problem of evil, wants to confine himself to the present position of the world, leaving out the question of the future altogether. Take, for instance, the following passage from Prof. C. E. M. Joad's *God and Evil* (p. 236):

"I have told in the third chapter how the new obtrusiveness of the fact of evil engendered the conviction that evil was a real and irreducible factor in the universe, and also how, paradoxically, the very fact of that conviction brought with it the felt need for a god to assist in the struggle to overcome evil. Now the admission of the reality of evil entails the view that this is a moral universe, in the sense that it is a universe in which conflict, the conflict between good and evil, is fundamental and presumably continuous. To accept evil as a given fact, and not to seek to overcome it, is possible only in so far as one is oneself evil."

Does this passage show that the author wants to confine himself to the present state of the world? What would in that case be his meaning in speaking of the struggle to overcome evil? This struggle is undoubtedly an event that continues in the future. And what about the end of the struggle, the actual overcoming of evil? That surely is something purely in the future.

The general problem of evil and the special problems.

From what we have said above, it is clear that from the point of view of evolution, evil is not a permanent factor of the world but arises at a certain stage of it when certain conditions prevail, and disappears when those conditions are no longer present. Evil, therefore, is a temporary and accidental characteristic of the world. The world as such is not evil. In the beginning the world was not evil, for in the darkness of Insconscience which then enveloped it, there could be no distinction between good and evil. In the end also there can be no evil. It is only in the middle stages of world-evolution that there is the possibility of evil. The question for us, therefore, is: How does evil arise in the world? This question reduces itself to the following: At what stage in the world-evolution does evil make its appearance?

Before discussing this general question it will be better to deal first with the special problems which arise in connection with the different types of evil as they have been enumerated and recognized by a practically unbroken tradition. Two types of evil have been recognized from the beginning of philosophical speculation. These are physical evil or pain and moral evil or sin. We propose therefore to deal with these two special problems before we come to the discussion of the general problem of evil.

The problem of physical evil or pain.

The most acute manner in which the problem of evil makes itself felt is in the presence of pain or suffering. How can there be pain or suffering in a world which is God's world? If God has created this suffering intentionally, then He is a wicked God. If, on the contrary, evil exists in the world in spite of God, then God cannot be said to be omnipotent. The whole question, however, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, has been vitiated by the circumstance that it treats God as something completely outside the world. Such a God, of course, who remains Himself completely free from suffering, if He permits His created beings to be tormented by it, would prove Himself to be a most cruel God, and therefore, utterly unworthy of being called God. But what if God does not stand outside the world, but is *in* the world and *of* the world, so that the world is flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone? We cannot then surely accuse Him of cruelty, but the question would still remain: Why or rather how (as we shall presently show, the question is one of 'how' rather than one of 'why') does God allow Himself to be involved in a world which is full of suffering?

There is a further question involved in the problem of pain. A not inconsiderable part of our suffering is due to the fact that there is present in us a consciousness of a better state of things than we find at present, in consequence of which we have an acute sense of discontent with the world as we find it to-day. This discontent, which we may call Divine discontent, is a direct consequence of the spiritual character of evolution. It is a clear reminder to man that he is not destined to remain where he is, but that he has a higher destiny. It constitutes the mainspring of his evolution to higher stages. It, in fact, creates in him an aspiration after a higher state, which is an indispensably necessary condition of his advance to higher levels of evolution. Its presence, therefore, although it causes him

acute discomfort, is the surest guarantee to him of his passing to a condition where evil will be a thing of the past.

Indeed, it will be a bad day for man if he loses this sense of dissatisfaction with the world. It is a mistake to think that the function of yoga is to deaden a man's sensibility. On the contrary, one of its chief effects is to increase enormously his power of sensing evil. There is a passage in Vyasa's commentary on the 15th *sūtra* of Chapter II of Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, which beautifully describes the heightened sensibility of the yogin to evil. Vyasa compares the yogin to the eye-ball and says that just as a thread of wool can give pain by mere contact when it touches the eye-ball but not when it touches other parts of the body, so the yogin feels pain when other people do not, for he is as tender as the eye-ball.

This has a very important bearing upon the problem of education. If the function of education is to help man to rise to a higher status, then it should not take away from him his feeling of dissatisfaction with the world. It is a totally wrong conception of education which will make a man lose his personality and accept the world at its face-value. Such an education will be the surest way of bringing man down to the level of beasts. True education, in fact, is education which will fit a man to rise from his present condition to a higher one, and ultimately to pass from the state of man to that of the Superman. Of course, it is not in the power of education, any more than it is in the power of yoga, to do this. In fact, the limits of education are the same as the limits of yoga. The only agency by which the transformation can be effected is the Grace of God. But education is the necessary preparation for the reception of the Divine Grace. Indeed, from this point of view, education is yoga and yoga is education.

It is not possible within the limits of this article to develop this view of education from the standpoint of the Superman. All that I can say is that it will revolutionise our ideas of education. Too much stress is laid to-day upon making men goody goody citizens who will accept all the current standards of life, and too little importance is attached to the development of personality. The new standpoint of education will make a clean sweep of all these methods which aim at perpetuating a race of 'respectable' men and women.

I come now to another important point in connection with the problem of physical evil. Pain cannot be regarded as an absolute, any more than pleasure. What I mean is that pain

and pleasure are the different ways in which the individual reacts to the contacts of the world. There is no invariable way, however, in which the individual responds to any particular contact. You cannot say: Given a certain amount of physical stimuli, it will *always* produce a fixed amount of pain or pleasure. Not only does it not produce the same quantity of the same feeling, but very often the same physical stimulus produces at different times feelings of opposite character. It is a very common experience that the same degree of heat and cold causes under different conditions feelings of the opposite quality. The degree of cold, for instance, which a man may find very exhilarating in his childhood may appear to him highly depressing in his old age. Training also has a great influence in changing pain into pleasure and *vice versa*. But the most important thing to observe here is that pleasure also cannot be regarded as an unmixed good, that is to say, as *Ananda* or Bliss. This is why the Epicureans did not look upon pleasure *qua* pleasure as a thing to be sought and wanted rather to have a life of perfect balance free from the excitement of pleasure as well as the depression of pain. In fact, pleasure itself is an imperfect response to the contacts of the universe. If, therefore, pain presents a problem to us, equally so does pleasure.

The problem of moral evil or sin.

I now come to what is perhaps regarded as even more baffling than the problem of physical evil—I mean the problem of moral evil. Physical evil does not throw such a direct challenge to the idea of the world being the creation of an all-perfect God as moral evil does, for it is possible to minimise the evil of suffering. It is possible also to suggest that it is the result of evil deeds done in former lives. There are again some orders of ascetics that look upon pain and suffering as part of their *tapasya*. But moral evil is a much more serious thing, and its existence is a far more serious challenge to God being regarded as the author of the world than anything possibly can be.

Yet Christian theists, like Martineau, have tried to whittle down its evil character by trying to show that it is an inevitable consequence of God's gift of freedom to man. This gift which is of inestimable value, carries, however, a sting in its tail. For it is on account of it that sin has arisen. But it is better, far better, that there should be sin than that man should lead a purely animal existence. for without freedom there would be

nothing to distinguish man from an animal. Freedom is man's privilege, freedom is man's glory, although it is also a great responsibility. By conferring freedom upon man God has honoured him as a moral being. Martineau is very eloquent on this point, and suggests that it is because God is holy, that He has done this, although by this He has opened the possibility of evil. "It is because He is Holy", says Martineau, "and cannot be content with an unmoral world where all the perfection is given and none is earned, that He refuses to render guilt impossible and inward harmony mechanical: were He only benevolent, it would suffice to fill His creation with the joy of sentient existence; but, being righteous too, He would have in His presence beings nearer to Himself, determining themselves by free preference to the life which He approves; and preference there cannot be, unless the double path is open. To set up therefore an absolute barrier against the admission of wrong, is to arrest the system of things at the mere natural order. and detain life at the stage of a human menagerie, instead of letting it culminate in a moral society".⁷ He is also very careful to point out that God cannot be held, except very remotely, responsible for the abuse which man may make of his freedom. "Notwithstanding", he says, "the supreme causality of God, it is rigorously true that only in a very restricted sense can he be held the author of moral evil".⁸

This explanation of the origin of moral evil really comes to this, that we must not blame God, for has He not given us freedom? Because He has given us freedom, we ought to put up with all the evils which this has brought in its train. Supposing a father were to make a present of a gun to his young son, a mere boy of ten or twelve, and say "Look here, I am making you a very valuable gift. You may use it properly or you may not, but whatever use you make of it, it is, and will continue to be, a very valuable gift", and supposing as a result of his mis-handling of this gift, the boy killed himself, would the father be exonerated from all blame, because he gave 'a very valuable gift'? The explanation really means this, that the value of a thing is independent of the use that is made of it. The illustration we have given above shows the absurdity of this view. If men are constitutionally incapable of making a proper use of freedom, then the gift of freedom to them cannot be justified. It may of course be said that it is only by the method of trial and error that the right use of anything can be learnt, and that God, by making this

⁷ *A Study of Religion*, Vol. II, page 102.

⁸ *Ibid* p. 101.

gift of freedom to man, has done nothing but ask him to learn the use of it in the only way in which it can be learnt, namely, by the method of trial and error. But this explanation will not hold water, for Martineau does not believe that it will ever be possible for man to make a proper use of it. His whole theory of morality rests upon the possibility of man's making an improper use of it. If every man could become an expert in the use of the gift of freedom, then, from Martineau's point of view, there would be no morality, and consequently, the purpose of the gift would disappear. The gift, therefore, serves its purpose only so long as it is possible to make a wrong use of it.

I do not call in question this view of morality. It is undoubtedly true that morality represents an imperfect stage of man's evolution. It is for this reason that Bradley called it an appearance of a higher reality. There are certain inherent limitations of morality which it can no more get rid of than a leopard can get rid of its skin. These limitations have been differently described by different philosophers. For Bradley the fundamental limitation of morality is that it starts with an impossible problem, namely, to make the ideal real, when the ideal can only remain an ideal so long as it is not real. In other words, the fundamental opposition between the real and the ideal, which is the basis of moral life, constitutes its most serious weakness. Because of this conflict which is inherent in the very nature of morality, Bradley called it an appearance.

But, as I have said above, I do not blame Martineau for holding this view of morality. Where he is wrong, however, is in not admitting that morality itself is imperfect. Paradoxical as it may seem, *morality is not free from evil*. It is not free from evil, because it is a partial view of truth and because it asserts this partial view as if it were a complete truth. In a complete view of the truth the ideal and the real will not remain apart, as they do in morality. Martineau, however, does not admit this imperfection of morality and seems to treat it as if it were complete in itself.

But where Martineau is most wrong is in his conception of God and His relation to man. His statement, "Notwithstanding the supreme causality of God, it is rigorously true that only in a very restricted sense can He be held the author of moral evil", does injustice to God as well as to man. It seems to suggest that God's interference with the different types of existence in the universe is inversely proportional to their importance in the scale of being. His interference is greatest in

the physical universe; it is least in the case of man. To use a familiar analogy, to the physical universe He has given the status of a dependency, to man He has given Dominion status. Perhaps He does not want to enact any Statute of Westminster at present and give man the power to secede, but there is no doubt that He has conferred Dominion status upon him, and therefore, He can no more be held responsible for the acts of men than the Mother Country can be held responsible for the acts of those parts of the Empire that have attained Dominion status. This view, based upon political analogy, is fundamentally wrong. God's responsibility—I won't call it interference—is equally great in all components of the universe. The political analogy is false, because God's relation to the universe is not an external one, like that of the Mother Country to the different components of the Empire. The different types of existence are not external to God, but they are in God and God is in them, so that the relationship of God to the world is one of complete internality. As the Gita puts it (vii. 7), “मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणि-गणा इव” (“The whole world is strung upon Me, as gems upon a string”).

This view also does very great injustice to man. It seems to suggest that God takes very little interest in man's affairs, as he has left him to manage them himself. Human affairs, far from being an object of indifference to God, are rather very dear to Him. It would indeed be a calamity if, as the price of freedom, man was denied a close and personal contact with God.

Before I pass on to the next topic, I would like to make clear what I mean by saying that morality is not free from evil. It is not free from evil, firstly, in the sense that it is not a full expression of truth, since it hides a fundamental contradiction within itself, and secondly, because it treats a partial truth as if it were a whole truth. As we shall see presently, it is the self-assertiveness of partial truth that gives rise to evil. Its position, however, in the scale of values is very high. It is a fundamental necessity for the world as it is to-day. It would be sheer madness to discard it at the present stage of our evolution. It is not only a fundamental requirement of our life at the present moment, but it is through it that we can hope to attain higher stages of our being. Moral life is the best way of getting rid of egoism, that product of ignorance which, as we shall presently see, is the root-cause of all evil. As we ascend higher and higher in the scale of morality, we go on dropping steadily one form of

egoism after another. Family life is the first halting-ground in the upward ascent of our moral life. Here we learn our first lesson in self-sacrifice, that is, in discarding our egoism. When we rise from this to corporate life in the State we get further and further lessons in self-sacrifice. Each step in the ladder means a further step away from egoism. It is true that complete loss of egoism is not possible in morality, because it is not complete in itself. The successive stages in the development of moral life and the gradual manner in which we go on dropping one form of egoism after another, are very beautifully expressed in that well-known couplet in the Mahābhārata (Ādi Parvan, Chap. 115, Verse 36) which contains the advice of Vidura and the Brahmins to Dhritarāshtra at the time of the birth of Duryodhana (which advice, unfortunately, the latter did not accept, with what disastrous results the Mahābhārata narrates), the advice being that he should discard that wicked son for the sake of the well-being of the family:

“त्यजेदेकं कुलं स्यार्थे ग्रामस्यार्थे कुलं त्यजेत् ।

ग्रामं जनपदस्यार्थे आत्मार्ये पृथिवीं त्यजेत् ॥”

(“One should sacrifice one (member) for the sake of the family, for the sake of the village the family should be sacrificed, for the sake of the country one should sacrifice the village, and for the sake of the soul, even the whole world is to be sacrificed”).

The successive stages in the process of discarding the ego, which represent successive rungs in the ladder of morality, are very clearly indicated here. They are oneself, one's family, one's village, one's country, and lastly, the world. The last stage depicted in this couplet transcends the stage of moral life, for moral life clings to the earth; it is of the earth, earthy. The couplet thus shows, in addition to the successive stages in the ascent of moral life, how moral life itself consummates itself in something higher, for “आत्मार्ये पृथिवीं त्यजेत्” really means: “Give up the whole of this moral life for the sake of the Soul”.

The general problem of Evil: It is a problem relating to ‘how’ and not to ‘why’.

I now come to our general problem: How does evil originate? The problem, we must remember, is a problem relating to ‘how’ and not relating to ‘why’. In fact, in a

problem like this, the 'how' and the 'why' are identical. This is the case with all ultimate questions. You may put a 'why' to all proximate questions: 'Why does night succeed day?' 'Why do the seasons vary?' 'Why is it colder at the North Pole than at the Equator?', etc. Such questions we can ask and quite meaningfully ask. But if you go on asking questions like these, you find that you come ultimately to a point where the question turns back upon itself, or rather where the 'why' is changed into a 'how'. It was the fashion at one time to indicate the relation between philosophy and science by saying that the full stops of science are the notes of interrogation of philosophy. This way of stating their relation, however, is only partially correct. For philosophy, in so far as it has to do with the ultimate questions, has to put all its fundamental problems in the form of 'how' and not in the form of 'why'. Readers of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are well aware that Kant put his fundamental philosophical question in the form of a 'how': 'How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?' Vaihinger in his commentary on this famous book of Kant has made it quite clear that this is the only way in which Kant could have put the general problem of philosophy, for a 'why' in this case could have meant nothing but a 'how'.

It can easily be seen that such questions as 'Why did God create the world?', 'Why did He create evil?' are really questions relating to 'how' and not relating to 'why'. If you ask, 'Why did God create the world?', what answer can be given except that He did create it? The only problem for philosophy, therefore, is to show *how* he did create it. Any 'why' or purpose must be already contained in God and cannot point to anything beyond Him, and consequently, the 'why' reduces itself to a 'how'.

It is true no doubt that the Upanishads speak of various purposes which God had in creating the world. For example, Chandogya Upanishad 6. 2, which starts with 'Being only, my dear, this was in the beginning one only, without a second', and goes on, 'It thought, 'May I be many, may I grow forth', 'It sent forth fire', mentions such purposes as becoming many, growing forth, etc. So again, in Brihadarynaka Upanishad 1. 2. 1, it is said, "In the beginning, there was nothing whatsoever. This world was covered over with death, with hunger, for hunger is death. Then he made up his mind: 'Would that I had a self!'" This passage also refers to a purpose which God had in creating, namely, the purpose of having a self. So too,

Br. Up. 1. 2. 4 says: "He desired 'would that a second self of mine were produced!' Similarly, Br. 7. 2. 6. says: He desired: 'Let me sacrifice forth with a greater sacrifice!' He exerted himself. He practised austerity". All these passages speak of different purposes, such as having a second self, sacrificing with a greater sacrifice. Many other passages may be quoted from other Upanishads which apparently seem to indicate the purposes which God had in creating the world.

But it should be remembered that these references to desire, meditation, etc., do not really show that there was any particular object which God had in creating. It is true that in the passage of the Chandogyanopanishad quoted above, it is stated that God desired to be Many. But can this really be treated as stating the object of creation? The One wanted to be Many. By becoming Many, the One did not become what it was not, for the same Upanishad has made it very clear by such expressions as "सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म", "तत्त्वमसि" that there is no Many which is not the One. So the desire to be Many cannot really be called a desire, in the sense in which we generally understand the word in the case of human beings, that is to say, in the sense of hankering after that which one has not got already. In fact, in the case of God there cannot be any desire at all. The Gita explains this very clearly when Lord Krishna says (III-22):

“न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥”

("O Partha! in all the three worlds there is nothing that I have to accomplish. I have neither anything which is not attained by me nor anything which is to be attained, and yet I remain in action").

The words, 'he desired', 'he deliberated', etc. do not therefore indicate any purpose or object which is to be achieved.

What, in fact, these words mean is that creation is the product of a conscious act of a Conscious Being and not merely the product of an Unconscious Prakriti. The celebrated fifth sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa—"ईक्षतेर्नाशब्दम्"—the arch upon which the whole structure of the Vedānta rests, makes this point very clear. This sūtra clarifies the meaning of the previous sutras. For instance, the second sūtra "जन्माद्यश्च यत इति" loses all its significance, unless it is understood in the light of this sūtra. For what is this 'यतः', what is the 'It' from which the whole world

proceeds? Is it a Conscious Being or is it an Unconscious Prakriti? Unless this question is solved, merely saying “जन्माद्यश्च यत् इति” has no significance. The fifth Sūtra, therefore, wants to assert absolutely unequivocally that the ‘It’ understood in the previous sūtra is a Conscious Being and is not an Unconscious Pradhana. The world is the product of Consciousness, and not the chance play of unconscious forces.

But the object of the sūtra is simply to establish this fact of the supreme rôle of Consciousness in creation. It is not to indicate the presence of any particular desire in the mind of God, it is not to establish any purpose which God had in creating. Any desire on the part of God, any purpose of His which remains unfulfilled and for the sake of which He has to create, is of course out of the question. This is very clear from the interpretation which Śaṅkara gives of this sūtra—an interpretation which emphasizes the origin of the world from a Conscious Being, but is silent about the purpose which that Being had in creating. Not only this, but he makes it very clear that the verb ‘ईक्ष्’ in this sūtra is not to be understood to mean only this verb, but it must be supposed to include all verbs which have a cognate meaning, that is to say, all verbs which indicate conscious action.⁹ Thus he says that the Mundaka text “यः सर्वज्ञः etc.” is also to be taken as supporting the meaning of this sūtra. This leaves no room for doubt that Śaṅkara takes ‘ईक्ष्’ in the general sense of action of a Conscious Being, as ‘opposed to unconscious action of Pradhana, for the Mundaka text speaks only of God’s *tapas* as ‘jñānamaya’, ‘enlightened by knowledge’, but not in the sense of desire or action with a definite purpose. This is further apparent from the fact that it describes the Creator as *sarvajña* and *sarvavit*, epithets which stress only the possession of knowledge.

⁹ The text of Śaṅkara’s commentary on this sūtra is as follows :

“ईक्षतेरिति च धात्वर्थनिर्देशोऽभिप्रेतो यजतेरिति वत् न धातुनिर्देशः । तेन

“यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद् यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपस्तस्मादेतद्ब्रह्म नाम रूपमन्नं च जायते” इत्येवमादीन्यपि सर्वज्ञेश्वरकारणपराणि वाक्यानि उदाहृतव्यानि” ॥

This may be translated as follows :

“By ‘seeing’ (i.e., the verb ‘seeing’ exhibited in the Sūtra) is not meant that particular verb only, but any verbs which have a cognate sense; just as the verb ‘to sacrifice’ is used to denote any kind of offering. Therefore other passages also whose purport it is to intimate that an all-knowing Lord is the cause of the world are to be quoted here, as, for instance, Mu. Up. I, 1, 9, ‘From him who perceives all and who knows all, whose brooding consists of knowledge, from him is born that Brahman, name and form and food’” (*Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 48).

I need not labour this point. It is quite clear that God could have no object in creating the world. Creation is a pure Lila, an expression of His spontaneity. Sri Aurobindo has made this very clear. Thus he calls the whole of creation a Lila, "the play, the child's joy, the poet's joy, the actor's joy, the mechanician's joy of the Soul of things eternally young, perpetually inexhaustible, creating and recreating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation—Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the playground".¹⁰

At what stage in the evolution of the world, does evil make its appearance?

The problem of evil, therefore, is: How did evil originate in the world?, not, Why did God create evil? But, as we have already seen, this problem reduces itself to this: At what stage in the world's evolution did evil make its appearance?, for evil is not a permanent feature of the world, but arises under certain conditions and disappears when those conditions vanish. It is only at certain stages in the world's evolution that evil is a feature of it; at other stages it is absent.

The world *qua* world is not evil. Plurality as such is not an evil, nor is movement. The one Consciousness-Force, for example, divides itself into three different forms, called respectively, Maya, Prakriti and Shakti, and Shakti itself manifests in four different forms, namely, as Maheshvari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasarasvati. But none of these forms can be regarded as evil. Mere plurality, therefore, mere division of the One into the Many, cannot be treated as evil. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "where there is oneness and complete mutuality of consciousness-force even in multiplicity and diversity, there truth of self-knowledge and mutual knowledge is automatic and error of self-ignorance and mutual ignorance is impossible".¹¹

So again, he says, "So too where truth exists as a whole on a basis of self-aware oneness, falsehood cannot enter and evil is shut out by the exclusion of wrong consciousness and wrong will and their dynamisation of falsehood and error. As soon as separateness enters, these things also can enter; but even this simultaneity is not inevitable. If there is sufficient mutuality, even in the absence of an active sense of oneness, and if the separate beings do not transgress or deviate from their norms of limited

¹⁰ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 155.

¹¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 467.

knowledge, harmony and truth can still be sovereign and evil will have no gate of entry".¹²

From these extracts it is clear that "when there is oneness and complete mutuality of consciousness-force", plurality and diversity cannot cause evil. So too, when 'truth exists as a whole on a basis of self-aware oneness', evil cannot enter. It is only when there is a disturbance of this self-aware oneness, that evil can enter. This happens when the separate divisions in their self-assertiveness offer opposition to the unity of consciousness-force which created the divisions. Separateness alone cannot cause evil, but when separateness is combined with this kind of self-assertiveness, which we may call aggressive self-assertiveness, an *imperium in imperio* is set up, and it is then that we have the beginning of evil. The name which Sri Aurobindo has given to this aggressive self-assertiveness is Egoism.

Such being the origin of evil, it is evident that it cannot arise when evolution is proceeding on the purely material plane. For then in the darkness of Inconscience, there is no self-awareness, still less any self-assertiveness. In order that evil may originate, it is necessary that evolution should reach the vital plane. For it is first here that self-assertiveness develops, and may develop in such a way as to become aggressive. It is then when evolution has reached the vital stage that we can look for the origin of evil.

In order to understand how evil originates at this stage, we have to picture to ourselves the conditions of existence when life just emerges in the course of evolution from matter. Such life finds itself surrounded on all sides by hostile material forces, and in order to maintain itself it is forced to assert itself against these hostile forces. In this way then is developed for the first time that self-assertiveness of life which grows into the aggressive type, which is called egoism. Egoism, therefore, arises out of the necessity which life feels of maintaining itself against hostile nature. With the emergence of a more developed form of consciousness, egoism becomes more strongly entrenched, for to the vital ego there is joined now the mental ego.

This is the normal way in which evil first makes its appearance. But there is also, according to Sri Aurobindo, another way in which evil enters the world. It is through the agency of beings representing forces of darkness who can act in a superphysical manner. "There are forces", says Sri Aurobindo, "and subliminal experience seems to show that there are supra-

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 467.

physical beings embodying those forces, that are attached in their root-nature to ignorance, to darkness of consciousness, to misuse of force, to perversity of delight, to all the causes and consequences of the things that we call evil. These powers, beings or forces are active to impose their adverse constructions upon terrestrial creatures; eager to maintain their reign in the manifestation, they oppose the increase of light and truth and good and, still more, are antagonistic to the progress of the soul towards a divine consciousness and divine existence. It is this feature of existence that we see figured in the tradition of the conflict between the Powers of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, cosmic Harmony and cosmic Anarchy, a tradition universal in ancient myth and in religion and common to all systems of occult knowledge".¹³ This world, in fact, is the world of Yakshas, Rākshasas, Asuras and Piśāchas. Belief in such a world is a very, very old one, and is found practically in all ancient religions. There seems also, thinks Sri Aurobindo, no logical objection to the acceptance of such a world unless "we cabin ourselves to the acceptance of material being as the only reality." If mind and life can have conscious beings to embody them in physical form to act in a physical world, why should it be impossible for them to form conscious beings who are invisible to us but who can act upon beings in the physical world?

The origin of such a world can be explained in two ways. In the first place, we may treat it as a supraphysical extension of the physical world. Or its origin can be explained "by the coexistence of worlds of a descending involution with parallel worlds of an ascending evolution, not precisely created by earth-existence, but created as an annexe to the descending world-order and a prepared support for the evolutionary terrestrial formation".¹⁴

This is perhaps how evil first entered the world, that is to say, as a direct result of the action of these beings, these invisible powers of darkness, upon terrestrial existence. But although these forces of darkness are very powerful, their existence can in no way be said to be a permanent feature of the universe. Their power may seem indeed to be immeasurable, but this should not lead us to think that evil is something absolute. For, as Sri Aurobindo carefully explains, "the immeasurable is not a sign of absoluteness, for the absolute is not in itself a thing of magnitude; it is beyond measure, not in

¹³ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 468-469.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 475.

the sole sense of vastness, but in the freedom of its essential being; it can manifest itself in the infinitesimal as well as in the infinite".¹⁵

We thus see that by whichever gate evil may enter, it cannot stay permanently in the world. It exists only when evolution is at the vital and mental stages, but disappears with the emergence of the higher stages.

How can the world be freed from Evil?

Having shown that evil is only a temporary phase of the evolution of the world and not a permanent feature of it, we have prepared the ground for our final problem: How can the world be freed from evil?

The solution of this problem is to be sought in a radical transformation of the world and not merely in the dawning of knowledge in individual consciousness. It must be remembered that our problem is a cosmic, and not an individual one. Even if some human beings obtain freedom from evil in their individual lives, our problem remains exactly where it was. For what we are contemplating is a radical change in the nature of the world which will free it completely from the incubus of evil.

But how is this radical change to be effected? Can it be effected by the slow process of evolution which is going on unceasingly? No doubt within a certain range the continuous process of evolution which is going on incessantly can effect a lasting change. But the range of such a change is very limited; it does not come to anything like the radical change we need. It has therefore to be supplemented by something else.

This something else is Divine Grace, the descent of the Divine Light in greater and greater intensity and purity. As I have said elsewhere, the world must be hooked on to something higher than itself if it is to be lifted out of its present rut. Grace is the name which we give to this 'something higher than itself' which is the essential condition of the radical change which alone can free the world from evil.

Prof. C. E. M. Joad in his book *God and Evil* sees also in Divine Grace the only solution of the problem of evil. But he puts evil first and then God's grace, as if God's grace only exists for the sake of the removal of evil. This is one of the worst cases of *hysteron proteron* that can be imagined. Evil becomes,

¹⁵ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 473.

in this view, the most fundamental reality and God's grace a subordinate one which is needed for the solution of the problem of evil, thus giving rise to an extreme form of occasionalism. The right view would be to reverse the relative positions of these. It is God's grace that is the ultimate reality, and in the light of this, evil is seen to be only a temporary phenomenon which comes into being at a certain stage in the world's evolution and disappears when evolution reaches a higher stage.

. But if Divine Grace is the sole agency by which the radical change in the nature of the world which will free it from evil can take place, must we conclude that human agency has nothing whatsoever to do in this matter? This would, in fact, be the true conclusion if the descent of Divine Grace did not require as its preliminary condition effort on the part of human beings to make themselves worthy of it. Grace does not descend unless there is an intense aspiration after it on the part of man.

It is necessary to have a clear idea of the relation between human effort and Divine grace. No effort on the part of human beings can force the Divine grace to descend. Sri Aurobindo has expressed his views on this point in a manner which leaves no room for doubt. "The Mother's power", he says, "and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the Immortal's Ananda".¹⁶ But that the Mother's power may descend and effect the radical change, "there is needed the call from below with a will to recognize and not deny the Light when it comes".

Grace, therefore, means, on the part of those who are to receive it, that they are fit for it. Here comes the question of yoga. Yoga is the method by which man can make himself fit for the reception of the Divine Light when it chooses to descend. There is, however, a great difference between Sri Aurobindo's conception of fitness and the traditional conception of it. Fitness in Sri Aurobindo's view does not mean, as it does in the traditional conception, complete detachment from the body, life and mind. Such detachment, far from making a man fit for the reception of Divine grace, would rather render him unfit for it. For what is wanted is that he should receive it with the whole of his being. If the Divine Light illumines only a part of his being, then he cannot retain it, and he is bound to relapse into his former condition.

¹⁶ *The Mother*, p. 84.

Fitness further means fitness for helping the world to rise to a higher status. Complete detachment from the body, life and mind would therefore render a man wholly unfit, for it would separate him completely from the world. It would in fact be an anti-spiritual move, for it would be a move towards separation and isolation, while spirituality means just the opposite of this, that is to say, greater solidarity and integrality with the whole universe.

It would, however, be a mistake to look upon grace and self-effort as if they were antithetical to each other. Far from being antithetical, they are really two aspects of the same reality. That reality is the Divine Power descending into the world to make it what it is. Effort on the part of the individual to improve himself, to rise to a higher status of himself, is itself a manifestation of the Divine Grace. For it is nothing else than an aspiration on the part of the individual after a higher realization of the Spirit than what he has already attained. It is therefore a fundamental implication of evolution. If it is true that the individual cannot by his own effort cause the Divine Grace to descend, it is equally true that his own effort to make himself worthy of it is itself due to the operation of the same principle which makes the descent of the Divine Grace inevitable. Therefore, as I have said elsewhere,¹⁷ at each step in the evolutionary process the two things must go together. "There must be an intense craving on the part of the individual for a higher light from the Divine Source, and an actual descent, on the part of that Source, in a higher form. Thus world evolution goes on, rising step by step to higher and higher levels, each step conditioning higher activity on the part of individual beings to improve themselves, to make themselves worthy of receiving higher light, and being itself conditioned by higher and higher forms of Divine Descent, grace meeting self-effort and self-effort continuously being crowned by grace". This is the manner in which Evil disappears from the face of the world.

¹⁷ *The Vedanta Kesari*, May 1944.

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